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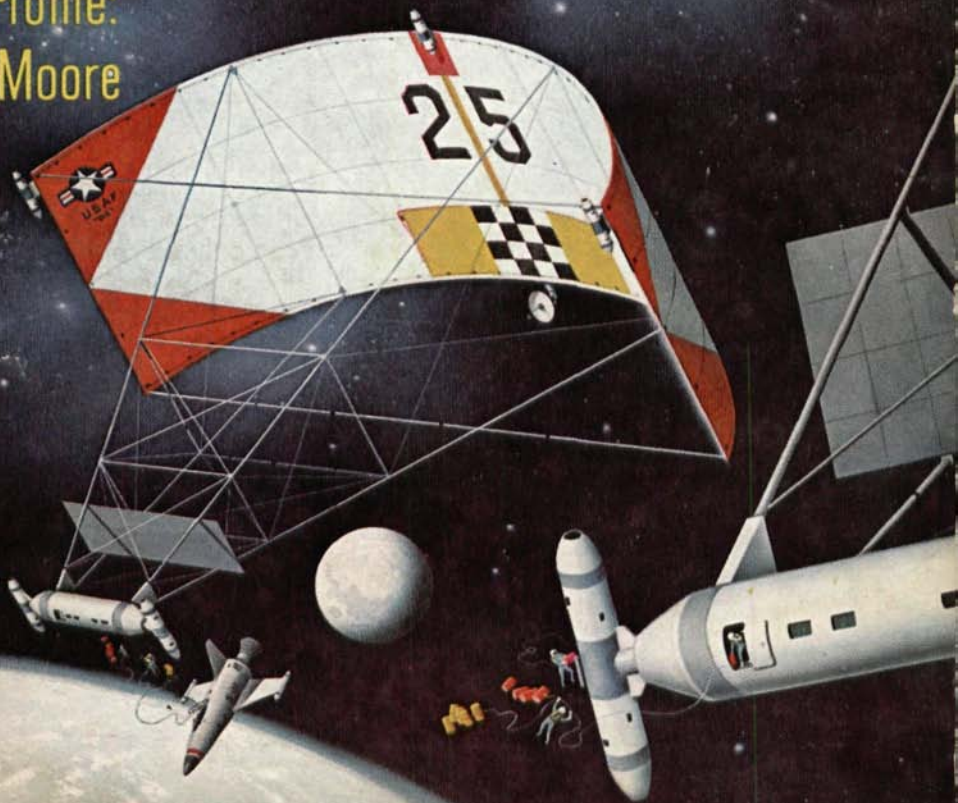
AUGUST

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GATEWAY TO STRANGENESS, by Jack Vance

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Amazing

Fact and Science Fiction

Stories

AUGUST, 1962

Vol. 36, No. 8

REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.

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EDITORIAL

Not long ago this editor got off his chest some thoughts about bomb-shelters, and was rewarded with a deluge of letters hailing him. Emboldened by this success, we plan to present to you today the Lobsenz Theory for the absolutely perfect way to end the Cold War:

The Theory, it must be admitted at the outset, owes its existence to a news story about a New Yorker name of Stephen James who is pushing a plan to end war by having the Russians and the Americans exchange hundreds of volunteer "hostages for peace." These hostages—ordinary people, political and business leaders, top artists, etc.—would move temporarily to the other country and live there for a few years. Each nation, then, would have a truly personal reason to avoid setting off a nuclear war by a preventive attack. Ultimately the rotation of hostages would lead, says Mr. James, to a lessening of tensions, an increase of mutual understanding, perhaps intermarriage, etc.

Mr. James' plan is being looked into by the State Department and the White House. I would like those gentlemen, if

they have a moment, to look into mine, too.

Why do this by dribs and drabs of hostages? *The way to put an end to the Cold War at once is for both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. to immediately exchange their total populations.*

The vistas that would open are endless. For one thing, Americans would once again have a "frontier"—a place to work off our energies and in which to use our technological knowhow. No farm problem: not with all those billions of unproductive acres in Siberia. Isolationism would be a thing of the past, as we would have to learn how to get along with neighbors who had land boundaries with us. There would be millions and millions of houses to build, factories to streamline, highways to pave. All the soccer fields would have to be converted to baseball diamonds. Think of the endless numbers of motels and gas stations and pizza palaces and ice cream stands. Full employment! A booming stock market!

Meanwhile, back at the old USA, the Russians would be coping with slum clearance, traffic

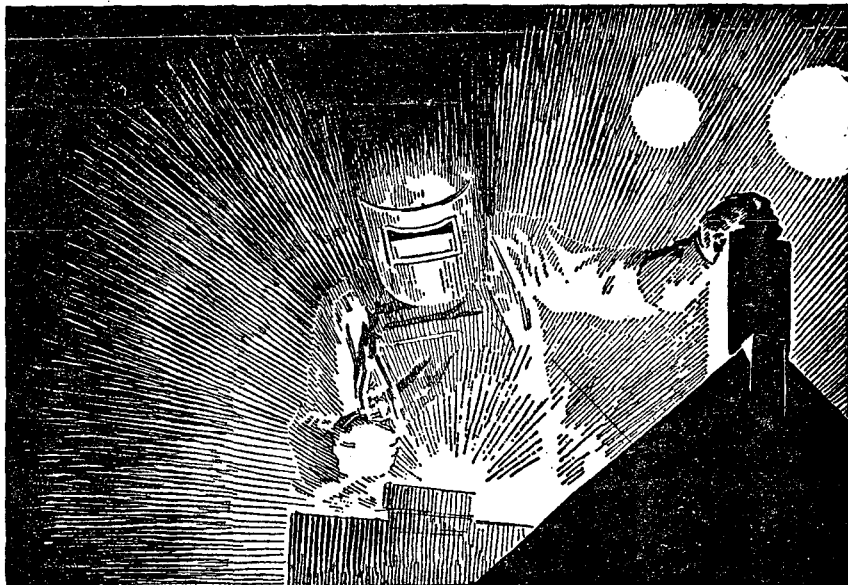
(Continued on page 126)

Gateway to Strangeness

By JACK VANCE

***The ship, its great sail spread to the fading sunlight,
fled through space like a ghost—out, always out.
There were still a billion miles to travel . . . a billion
miles before they'd know whether they would ever come back.***

Illustrated by FINLAY



CHAPTER 1

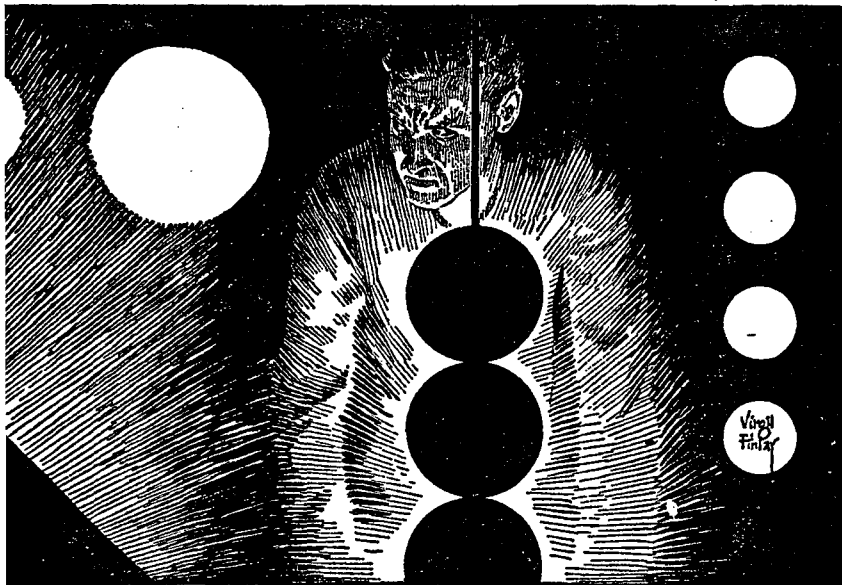
HENRY BELT came limping into the conference room mounted the dais, settled himself at the desk. He looked once around the room: a swift bright glance which, focusing nowhere, treated the eight young men who faced him to an almost insulting disinterest. He reached in his pocket, brought forth a pencil and a flat red book, which he placed on the desk. The eight young men watched in absolute silence. They were much alike: healthy, clean, smart, their expressions identically alert and wary. Each had heard legends of Henry Belt, each had formed his

private plans and private determinations.

Henry Belt seemed a man of a different species. His face was broad, flat, roped with cartilage and muscle, with skin the color and texture of bacon rind. Coarse white grizzle covered his scalp, his eyes were crafty slits, his nose a misshapen lump. His shoulders were massive, his legs short and gnarled.

"First of all," said Henry Belt, with a gap-toothed grin, "I'll make it clear that I don't expect you to like me. If you do I'll be surprised and displeased. It will mean that I haven't pushed you hard enough."

He leaned back in his chair,



surveyed the silent group. "You've heard stories about me. Why haven't they kicked me out of the service? Incurable, arrogant, dangerous Henry Belt. Drunken Henry Belt. (This last of course is slander. Henry Belt has never been drunk in his life.) Why do they tolerate me? For one simple reason: out of necessity. No one wants to take on this kind of job. Only a man like Henry Belt can stand up to it: year after year in space, with nothing to look at but a half-dozen round-faced young scrubs. He takes them out, he brings them back. Not all of them, and not all of those who come back are space-men today. But they'll all cross the street when they see him coming. Henry Belt? you say. They'll turn pale or go red. None of them will smile. Some of them are high-placed now. They could kick me loose if they chose. Ask them why they don't. Henry Belt is a terror, they'll tell you. He's wicked, he's a tyrant. Cruel as an axe, fickle as a woman. But a voyage with Henry Belt blows the foam off the beer. He's ruined many a man, he's killed a few, but those that come out of it are proud to say, I trained with Henry Belt!

ANOTHER thing you may hear: Henry Belt has luck. But don't pay any heed. Luck runs out. You'll be my thirteenth class, and that's unlucky. I've

taken out seventy-two young sprats, no different from yourselves; I've come back twelve times: which is partly Henry Belt and partly luck. The voyages average about two years long: how can a man stand it? There's only one who could: Henry Belt. I've got more space-time than any man alive, and now I'll tell you a secret: this is my last time out. I'm starting to wake up at night to strange visions. After this class I'll quit. I hope you lads aren't superstitious. A white-eyed woman told me that I'd die in space. She told me other things and they've all come true. "We'll get to know each other well. And you'll be wondering on what basis I make my recommendations. Am I objective and fair? Do I put aside personal animosity? Naturally there won't be any friendship. Well, here's my system. I keep a red book. Here it is. I'll put your names down right now. You, sir?"

"I'm Cadet Lewis Lynch, sir."

"You?"

"Edward Culpepper, sir."

"Marcus Verona, sir."

"Vidal Weske, sir."

"Marvin McGrath, sir."

"Barry Ostrander, sir."

"Clyde von Gluck, sir."

"Joseph Sutton, sir."

Henry Belt wrote the names in the red book. "This is the system. When you do something to annoy me, I mark you down de-

merits. At the end of the voyage I total these demerits, add a few here and there for luck, and am so guided. I'm sure nothing could be clearer than this. What annoys me? Ah, that's a question which is hard to answer. If you talk too much: demerits. If you're surly and taciturn: demerits. If you slouch and laze and dog the dirty work: demerits. If you're over-zealous and forever scuttling about: demerits. Obsequiousness: demerits. Truculence: demerits. If you sing and whistle: demerits. If you're a stolid bloody bore: demerits. You can see that the line is hard to draw. Here's a hint which can save you many marks. I don't like gossip, especially when it concerns myself. I'm a sensitive man, and I open my red book fast when I think I'm being insulted." Henry Belt once more leaned back in his chair. "Any questions?"

No one spoke.

Henry Belt nodded. "Wise. Best not to flaunt your ignorance so early in the game. In response to the thought passing through each of your skulls, I do not think of myself as God. But you may do so, if you choose. And this—" he held up the red book "—you may regard as the Syncretic Compendium. Very well. Any questions?"

"Yes sir," said Culpepper.

"Speak, sir."

"Any objection to alcoholic beverages aboard ship, sir?"

"For the cadets, yes indeed. I concede that the water must be carried in any event, that the organic compounds present may be reconstituted, but unluckily the bottles weigh far too much."

"I understand, sir."

Henry Belt rose to his feet. "One last word. Have I mentioned that I run a tight ship? When I say jump, I expect everyone of you to jump. This is dangerous work, of course. I don't guarantee your safety. Far from it, especially since we are assigned to old 25, which should have been broken up long ago. There are eight of you present. Only six cadets will make the voyage. Before the week is over I will make the appropriate notifications. Any more questions? . . . Very well, then. Cheerio." Limping on his thin legs as if his feet hurt Henry Belt departed into the back passage.

FOR a moment or two there was silence. Then von Gluck said in a soft voice, "My gracious."

"He's a tyrannical lunatic," grumbled Weske. "I've never heard anything like it! Megalomania!"

"Easy," said Culpepper. "Remember, no gossiping."

"Bah!" muttered McGrath. "This is a free country. I'll damn well say what I like."

Weske rose to his feet. "A wonder somebody hasn't killed him."

"I wouldn't want to try it," said Culpepper. "He looks tough." He made a gesture, stood up, brow furrowed in thought. Then he went to look along the passageway into which Henry Belt had made his departure. There, pressed to the wall, stood Henry Belt. "Yes, sir," said Culpepper suavely. "I forgot to inquire when you wanted us to convene again."

Henry Belt returned to the rostrum. "Now is as good a time as any." He took his seat, opened his red book. "You, Mr. von Gluck, made the remark, 'My gracious' in an offensive tone of voice. One demerit. You, Mr. Weske, employed the terms 'tyrannical lunatic' and 'megalo-mania', in reference to myself. Three demerits. Mr. McGrath, you observed that freedom of speech is the official doctrine of this country. It is a theory which presently we have no time to explore, but I believe that the statement in its present context carries an overtone of insubordination. One demerit. Mr. Culpepper, your imperturbable complacency irritates me. I prefer that you display more uncertainty, or even uneasiness."

"Sorry, sir."

"However, you took occasion to remind your colleagues of my

rule, and so I will not mark you down."

"Thank you, sir."

Henry Belt leaned back in the chair, stared at the ceiling. "Listen closely, as I do not care to repeat myself. Take notes if you wish. Topic: Solar Sails, Theory and Practice thereof. Material with which you should already be familiar, but which I will repeat in order to avoid ambiguity.

"First, why bother with the sail, when nuclear jet-ships are faster, more dependable, more direct, safer and easier to navigate? The answer is three-fold. First, a sail is not a bad way to move heavy cargo slowly but cheaply through space. Secondly, the range of the sail is unlimited, since we employ the mechanical pressure of light for thrust, and therefore need carry neither propulsive machinery, material to be ejected, nor energy source. The solar sail is much lighter than its nuclear-powered counterpart, and may carry a larger complement of men in a larger hull. Thirdly, to train a man for space there is no better instrument than the handling of a sail. The computer naturally calculates sail cant and plots the course; in fact, without the computer we'd be dead ducks. Nevertheless the control of a sail provides working familiarity with the cosmic elementals: light, gravity, mass, space.

THERE are two types of sail: pure and composite. The first relies on solar energy exclusively, the second carries a secondary power source. We have been assigned Number 25, which is the first sort. It consists of a hull, a large parabolic reflector which serves as radar and radio antenna, as well as reflector for the power generator; and the sail itself. The pressure of radiation, of course, is extremely slight—on the order of an ounce per acre at this distance from the sun. Necessarily the sail must be extremely large and extremely light. We use a fluoro-siliconic film a tenth of a mil in gauge, fogged with lithium to the state of opacity. I believe the layer of lithium is about a thousand two hundred molecules thick. Such a foil weighs about four tons to the square mile. It is fitted to a hoop of thin-walled tubing, from which mono-crystalline iron cords lead to the hull.

"We try to achieve a weight factor of six tons to the square mile, which produces an acceleration of between $g/100$ and $g/1000$ depending on proximity to the sun, angle of cant, circum-solar orbital speed, reflectivity of surface. These accelerations seem minute, but calculation shows them to be cumulatively enormous. $G/100$ yields a velocity increment of 800 miles per hour every hour, 18,000 miles per hour

each day, or five miles per second each day. At this rate inter-planetary distances are readily negotiable—with proper manipulation of the sail, I need hardly say.

"The virtues of the sail I've mentioned. It is cheap to build and cheap to operate. It requires neither fuel, nor ejectant. As it travels through space, the great area captures various ions, which may be expelled in the plasma jet powered by the parabolic reflector, which adds another increment to the acceleration.

"The disadvantages of the sail are those of the glider or sailing ship, in that we must use natural forces with great precision and delicacy.

"There is no particular limit to the size of the sail. On 25 we use about four square miles of sail. For the present voyage we will install a new sail, as the old is well-worn and eroded.

"That will be all for today." Once more Henry Belt limped down from the dais and out the passage. On this occasion there were no comments.

CHAPTER 2

THE eight cadets shared a dormitory, attended classes together, ate at the same table in the mess-hall. In various shops and laboratories they assembled, disassembled and reassembled

computers, pumps, generators, gyro-platforms, star-trackers, communication gear. "It's not enough to be clever with your hands," said Henry Belt. "Dexterity is not enough. Resourcefulness, creativity, the ability to make successful improvisations—these are more important. We'll test you out." And presently each of the cadets was introduced into a room on the floor of which lay a great heap of mingled housings, wires, flexes, gears, components of a dozen varieties of mechanism. "This is a twenty-six hour test," said Henry Belt. "Each of you has an identical set of components and supplies. There shall be no exchange of parts or information between you. Those whom I suspect of this fault will be dropped from the class, without recommendation. What I want you to build is, first, one standard Aminex Mark 9 Computer. Second, a servo-mechanism to orient a mass ten kilograms toward Mu Hercules. Why Mu Hercules?"

"Because, sir, the solar system moves in the direction of Mu Hercules; and we thereby avoid parallax error. Negligible though it may be, sir."

"The final comment smacks of frivolity, Mr. McGrath, which serves only to distract the attention of those who are trying to take careful note of my instructions. One demerit."

"Sorry, sir. I merely intended to express my awareness that for many practical purposes such a degree of accuracy is unnecessary."

"That idea, cadet, is sufficiently elemental that it need not be labored. I appreciate brevity and precision."

"Yes, sir."

"Thirdly, from these materials, assemble a communication system, operating on one hundred watts, which will permit two-way conversation between Tycho Base and Phobos, at whatever frequency you deem suitable."

THE cadets started in identical fashion by sorting the material into various piles, then calibrating and checking the test instruments. Achievement thereafter was disparate. Culpepper and von Gluck, diagnosing the test as partly one of mechanical ingenuity and partly ordeal by frustration, failed to become excited when several indispensable components proved either to be missing or inoperative, and carried each project as far as immediately feasible. McGrath and Weske, beginning with the computer, were reduced to rage and random action. Lynch and Sutton worked doggedly at the computer, Verona at the communication system.

Culpepper alone managed to

complete one of the instruments, by the process of sawing, polishing and cementing together sections of two broken crystals into a crude, inefficient but operative maser unit.

THE day after this test McGrath and Weske disappeared from the dormitory, whether by their own volition or notification from Henry Belt, no one ever knew.

The test was followed by weekend leave. Cadet Lynch, attending a cocktail party, found himself in conversation with a Lieutenant-Colonel Trenchard, who shook his head pityingly to hear that Lynch was training with Henry Belt.

"I was up with Old Horrors myself. I tell you it's a miracle we ever got back. Belt was drunk two-thirds of the voyage."

"How does he escape court-martial?" asked Lynch.

"Very simple. All the top men seem to have trained under Henry Belt. Naturally they hate his guts but they all take a perverse pride in the fact. And maybe they hope that someday a cadet will take him apart."

"Have any ever tried?"

"Oh yes. I took a swing at Henry once. I was lucky to escape with a broken collarbone and two sprained ankles. If you come back alive, you'll stand a good chance of reaching the top."

THE next evening Henry Belt passed the word. "Next Tuesday morning we go up. We'll be gone several months."

On Tuesday morning the cadets took their places in the angel-wagon. Henry Belt presently appeared. The pilot readied for take-off.

"Hold your hats. On the count . . ." The projectile thrust against the earth, strained, rose, went streaking up into the sky. An hour later the pilot pointed. "There's your boat. Old 25. And 39 right beside it, just in from space."

Henry Belt stared aghast from the port. "What's been done to the ship? The decoration? The red? the white? the yellow? The checkerboard."

"Thank some idiot of a land-lubber," said the pilot. "The word came to pretty the old boats for a junket of congressmen."

Henry Belt turned to the cadets. "Observe this foolishness. It is the result of vanity and ignorance. We will be occupied several days removing the paint."

They drifted close below the two sails: No. 39 just down from space, spare and polished beside the bedizened structure of No. 25. In 39's exit port a group of men waited, their gear floating at the end of cords.

"Observe those men," said Henry Belt. "They are jaunty. They have been on a pleasant

outing around the planet Mars. They are poorly trained. When you gentlemen return you will be haggard and desperate and well-trained. Now, gentlemen, clamp your helmets, and we will proceed."

The helmets were secured. Henry Belt's voice came by radio. "Lynch, Ostrander will remain here to discharge cargo. Verona, Culpepper, von Gluck, Sutton, leap with cords to the ship; ferry across the cargo, stow it in the proper hatches."

Henry Belt took charge of his personal cargo, which consisted of several large cases. He eased them out into space, clipped on lines, thrust them toward 25, leapt after. Pulling himself and the cases to the entrance port he disappeared within.

Discharge of cargo was effected. The crew from 39 transferred to the carrier, which thereupon swung down and away, thrust itself dwindling back toward earth.

WHEN the cargo had been stowed, the cadets gathered in the wardroom. Henry Belt appeared from the master's cubicle. "Gentlemen, how do you like the surroundings? Eh, Mr. Culpepper?"

"The hull is commodious, sir. The view is superb."

Henry Belt nodded. "Mr. Lynch? Your impressions?"

"I'm afraid I haven't sorted them out yet, sir."

"I see. You, Mr. Sutton?"

"Space is larger than I imagined it, sir."

"True. Space is unimaginable. A good space-man must either be larger than space, or he must ignore it. Both difficult. Well, gentlemen, I will make a few comments, then I will retire and enjoy the voyage. Since this is my last time out, I intend to do nothing whatever. The operation of the ship will be completely in your hands. I will merely appear from time to time to beam benevolently about or alas! to make marks in my red book. Nominally I shall be in command, but you six will enjoy complete control over the ship. If you return us safely to Earth I will make an approving entry in my red book. If you wreck us or fling us into the sun, you will be more unhappy than I, since it is my destiny to die in space. Mr. von Gluck, do I perceive a smirk on your face?"

"No, sir, it is a thoughtful half-smile."

"What is humorous in the concept of my demise, may I ask?"

"It will be a great tragedy, sir. I merely was reflecting upon the contemporary persistence of, well, not exactly superstition, but, let us say, the conviction of a subjective cosmos."

Henry Belt made a notation in

the red book. "Whatever is meant by this barbaric jargon I'm sure I don't know, Mr. von Gluck. It is clear that you fancy yourself a philosopher and dialectician. I will not fault this, so long as your remarks conceal no overtones of malice and insolence, to which I am extremely sensitive. Now as to the persistence of superstition, only an impoverished mind considers itself the repository of absolute knowledge. Hamlet spoke on this subject to Horatio, as I recall, in the well-known work by William Shakespeare. I myself have seen strange and terrifying sights. Were they hallucinations? Were they the manipulation of the cosmos by my mind or the mind of someone—or something—other than myself? I do not know. I therefore counsel a flexible attitude toward matters where the truth is still unknown. For this reason: the impact of an inexplicable experience may well destroy a mind which is too brittle. Do I make myself clear?"

"Perfectly, sir."

"Very good. To return, then. We shall set a system of watches whereby each man works in turn with each of the other five. I thereby hope to discourage the formation of special friendships, or cliques."

YOU have inspected the ship. The hull is a sandwich of

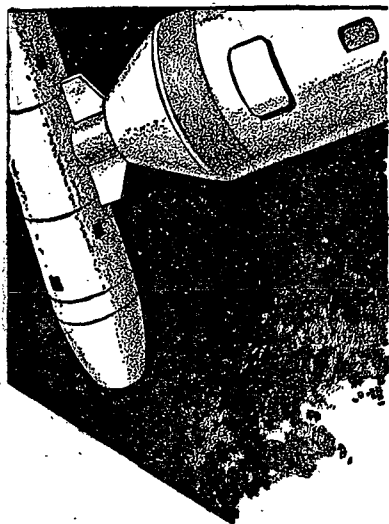
lithium-beryllium, insulating foam, fiber and an interior skin. Very light, held rigid by air pressure rather than by any innate strength of the material. We can therefore afford enough space to stretch our legs and provide all of us with privacy.

"The master's cubicle is to the left; under no circumstances is anyone permitted in my quarters. If you wish to speak to me, knock on my door. If I appear, good. If I do not appear, go away. To the right are six cubicles which you may now distribute among yourselves by lot."

"Your schedule will be two hours study, four hours on watch, six hours off. I will require no specific rate of study progress, but I recommend that you make good use of your time.

"Our destination is Mars. We will presently construct a new sail, then while orbital velocity builds up, you will carefully test and check all equipment aboard. Each of you will compute sail cant and course and work out among yourselves any discrepancies which may appear. I shall take no hand in navigation. I prefer that you involve me in no disaster. If any such occur I shall severely mark down the persons responsible.

"Singing, whistling, humming, are forbidden. I disapprove of fear and hysteria, and mark accordingly. No one dies more than



once; we are well aware of the risks of this, our chosen occupation. There will be no practical jokes. You may fight, so long as you do not disturb me or break any instruments; however I counsel against it, as it leads to resentment, and I have known cadets to kill each other. I suggest coolness and detachment in your personal relations. Use of the micro-film projector is of course at your own option. You may not use the radio either to despatch or receive messages. In fact I have put the radio out of commission, as is my practice. I do this to emphasize the fact that, sink or swim, we must make do with our own resources. Are there any questions? . . . Very good. You will find that if you all behave with scrupulous cor-

rectness and accuracy, we shall in due course return safe and sound, with a minimum of demerit and no casualties. I am bound to say, however, that in twelve previous voyages this has failed to occur. Now you select your cubicles, stow your gear. The carrier will bring up the new sail tomorrow, and you will go to work."

CHAPTER 3

THE carrier discharged a great bundle of three-inch tubing: paper-thin lithium hardened with beryllium, reinforced with filaments of mono-crystalline iron—a total length of eight miles. The cadets fitted the tubes end to end, cementing the joints. When the tube extended a quarter-mile it was bent bow-shaped by a cord stretched between two ends, and further sections added. As the process continued the free end curved far out and around, and presently began to veer back in toward the hull. When the last tube was in place the loose end was hauled down, socketed home, to form a great hoop two miles and a half in diameter.

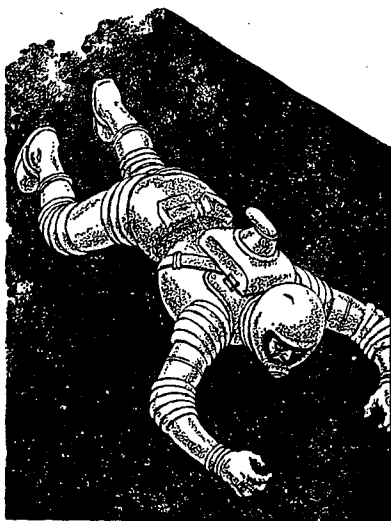
Henry Belt came out occasionally in his space suit to look on, and occasionally spoke a few words of sardonic comment, to which the cadets paid little heed. Their mood had changed; this was exhilaration, to be weight-

lessly afloat above the bright cloud-marked globe, with continent and ocean wheeling massively below. Anything seemed possible, even the training voyage with Henry Belt! When he came out to inspect their work, they grinned at each other with indulgent amusement. Henry Belt suddenly seemed a rather pitiful creature, a poor vagabond suited only for drunken bluster. Fortunate indeed that they were less naive than Henry Belt's previous classes! They had taken Belt seriously; he had cowed them, reduced them to nervous pulp. Not this crew, not by a long shot! They saw through Henry Belt! Just keep your nose clean, do your work, keep cheerful. The training voyage won't last but a few months, and then real life begins. Gut it out, ignore Henry Belt as much as possible. This is the sensible attitude; the best way to keep on top of the situation.

Already the group had made a composite assessment of its members, arriving at a set of convenient labels. Culpepper: smooth, suave, easy-going. Lynch: excitable, argumentative, hot-tempered. Von Gluck: the artistic temperament, delicate with hands and sensibilities. Ostrander: prissy, finicky, over-tidy. Sutton: moody, suspicious, competitive. Verona: the plugger, rough at the edges, but persistent and reliable.

AROUND the hull swung the gleaming hoop, and now the carrier brought up the sail, a great roll of darkly shining stuff. When unfolded and unrolled, and unfolded many times more it became a tough gleaming film, flimsy as gold leaf. Unfolded to its fullest extent it was a shimmering disk, already rippling and bulging to the light of the sun. The cadets fitted the film to the hoop, stretched it taut as a drum-head, cemented it in place. Now the sail must carefully be held edge on to the sun, or it would quickly move away, under a thrust of about a hundred pounds.

From the rim braided-iron threads were led to a ring at the back of the parabolic reflector, dwarfing this as the reflector



dwarfed the hull, and now the sail was ready to move.

The carrier brought up a final cargo: water, food, spare parts, a new magazine for the microfilm viewer, mail. Then Henry Belt said, "Make sail."

This was the process of turning the sail to catch the sunlight while the hull moved around Earth away from the sun, canting it parallel to the sun-rays when the ship moved on the sunward leg of its orbit: in short, building up an orbital velocity which in due course would stretch loose the bonds of terrestrial gravity and send Sail 25 kiting out toward Mars.

During this period the cadets checked every item of equipment aboard the vessel. They grimaced with disgust and dismay at some of the instruments: 25 was an old ship, with antiquated gear. Henry Belt seemed to enjoy their grumbling. "This is a training voyage, not a pleasure cruise. If you wanted your noses wiped, you should have taken a post on the ground. And, I have no sympathy for fault-finders. If you wish a model by which to form your own conduct, observe me."

The moody introspective Sutton, usually the most diffident and laconic of individuals, ventured an ill-advised witticism. "If we modeled ourselves after you, sir, there'd be no room to move for the whiskey."

Out came the red book. "Extraordinary impudence, Mr. Sutton. How can you yield so easily to malice?"

Sutton flushed pink; his eyes glistened, he opened his mouth to speak, then closed it firmly. Henry Belt, waiting politely expectant, turned away. "You gentlemen will perceive that I rigorously obey my own rules of conduct. I am regular as a clock. There is no better, more genial shipmate than Henry Belt. There is not a fairer man alive. Mr. Culpepper, you have a remark to make?"

"Nothing of consequence, sir."

HENRY BELT went to the port, glared out at the sail. He swung around instantly. "Who is on watch?"

"Sutton and Ostrander, sir."

"Gentlemen, have you noticed the sail? It has swung about and is canting to show its back to the sun. In another ten minutes we shall be tangled in a hundred miles of guy-wires."

Sutton and Ostrander sprang to repair the situation. Henry Belt shook his head disparagingly. "This is precisely what is meant by the words 'negligence' and 'inattentiveness'. You two have committed a serious error. This is poor spacemanship. The sail must always be in such a position as to hold the wires taut."

"There seems to be something wrong with the sensor, sir," Sutton blurted. "It should notify us when the sail swings behind us."

"I fear I must charge you an additional demerit for making excuses, Mr. Sutton. It is your duty to assure yourself that all the warning devices are functioning properly, at all times. Machinery must never be used as a substitute for vigilance."

Ostrander looked up from the control console. "Someone has turned off the switch, sir. I do not offer this as an excuse, but as an explanation."

"The line of distinction is often hard to define, Mr. Ostrander. Please bear in mind my remarks on the subject of vigilance."

"Yes, sir, but—who turned off the switch?"

"Both you and Mr. Sutton are theoretically hard at work watching for any such accident or occurrence. Did you not observe it?"

"No, sir."

"I might almost accuse you of further inattention and neglect, in this case."

Ostrander gave Henry Belt a long dubious side-glance. "The only person I recall going near the console is yourself, sir. I'm sure you wouldn't do such a thing."

Henry Belt shook his head sadly. "In space you must never rely on anyone for rational con-

duct. A few moments ago Mr. Sutton unfairly imputed to me an unusual thirst for whiskey. Suppose this were the case? Suppose, as an example of pure irony, that I had indeed been drinking whiskey, that I was in fact drunk?"

"I will agree, sir, that anything is possible."

HENRY BELT shook his head again. "That is the type of remark, Mr. Ostrander, that I have come to associate with Mr. Culpepper. A better response would have been, 'In the future, I will try to be ready for any conceivable contingency.' Mr. Sutton, did you make a hissing sound between your teeth?"

"I was breathing, sir."

"Please breathe with less vehemence."

Henry Belt turned away and wandered back and forth about the wardroom, scrutinizing cases, frowning at smudges on polished metal. Ostrander muttered something to Sutton, and both watched Henry Belt closely as he moved here and there. Presently Henry Belt lurched toward them. "You show great interest in my movements, gentlemen."

"We were on the watch for another unlikely contingency, sir."

"Very good, Mr. Ostrander. Stick with it. In space nothing is impossible. I'll vouch for this personally."

HENRY BELT sent all hands out to remove the paint from the surface of the parabolic reflector. When this had been accomplished, incident sunlight was now focussed upon an expanse of photo-electric cells. The power so generated was used to operate plasma jets, expelling ions collected by the vast expanse of sail, further accelerating the ship, thrusting it ever out into an orbit of escape. And finally one day, at an exact instant dictated by the computer, the ship departed from Earth and floated tangentially out into space, off at an angle for the orbit of Mars. At an acceleration of g/100 velocity built up rapidly. Earth dwindled behind; the ship was isolated in space. The cadets' exhilaration vanished, to be replaced by an almost funereal solemnity. The vision of Earth dwindling and retreating is an awesome symbol, equivalent to eternal loss, to the act of dying itself. The more impressionable cadets—Sutton, von Gluck, Osterlander—could not look astern without finding their eyes swimming with tears. Even the suave Culpepper was awed by the magnificence of the spectacle, the sun an aching pit not to be tolerated, Earth a plump pearl rolling on black velvet among a myriad glittering diamonds. And away from

Earth, away from the sun, opened an exalted magnificence of another order entirely. For the first time the cadets became dimly aware that Henry Belt had spoken truly of strange visions. Here was death, here was peace, solitude, star-blazing beauty which promised not oblivion in death, but eternity. . . . Streams and spatters of stars. . . . The familiar constellation, the stars with their prideful names presenting themselves like heroes: Achernar, Fomalhaut, Sadal, Suud, Canopus. . . .

Sutton could not bear to look into the sky. "It's not that I feel fear," he told von Gluck, "or yes, perhaps it is fear. It sucks at me, draws me out there. . . . I suppose in due course I'll become accustomed to it."

"I'm not so sure," said von Gluck. "I wouldn't be surprised if space could become a psychological addiction, a need—so that whenever you walked on Earth you felt hot and breathless."

LIFE settled into a routine. Henry Belt no longer seemed a man, but a capricious aspect of nature, like storm or lightning; and like some natural cataclysm, Henry Belt showed no favoritism, nor forgave one jot or tittle of offense. Apart from the private cubicles no place on the ship escaped his attention. Always he reeked of whiskey, and

it became a matter of covert speculation as to exactly how much whiskey he had brought aboard. But no matter how he reeked or how he swayed on his feet, his eyes remained clever and steady, and he spoke without slurring in his paradoxically clear sweet voice.

One day he seemed slightly drunker than usual, and ordered all hands into space-suits and out to inspect the sail for meteoric puncture. The order seemed sufficiently odd that the cadets stared at him in disbelief. "Gentlemen, you hesitate, you fail to exert yourselves, you luxuriate in sloth. Do you fancy yourselves at the Riviera? Into the space-suits, on the double, and everybody into space. Check hoop, sail, reflector, struts and sensor. You will be adrift for two hours. When you return I want a comprehensive report. Mr. Lynch, I believe you are in charge of this watch. You will present the report."

"Yes, sir."

"One more matter. You will notice that the sail is slightly bellied by the continual radiation pressure. It therefore acts as a focusing device, the focal point presumably occurring behind the cab. But this is not a matter to be taken for granted. I have seen a man burnt to death in such a freak accident. Bear this in mind."

For two hours the cadets drifted through space, propelled by tanks of gas and thrust tubes. All enjoyed the experience except Sutton, who found himself appalled by the immensity of his emotions. Probably least affected was the practical Verona, who inspected the sail with a care exacting enough even to satisfy Henry Belt.

The next day the computer went wrong. Ostrander was in charge of the watch and knocked on Henry Belt's door to make the report.

Henry Belt appeared in the doorway. He apparently had been asleep. "What is the difficulty, Mr. Ostrander?"

"We're in trouble, sir. The computer has gone out."

Henry Belt rubbed his grizzled pate. "This is not an unusual circumstance. We prepare for this contingency by schooling all cadets thoroughly in computer design and repair. Have you identified the difficulty?"

"The bearings which suspend the data separation disks have broken. The shaft has several millimeters play and as a result there is total confusion in the data presented to the analyzer."

"An interesting problem. Why do you present it to me?"

"I thought you should be notified, sir. I don't believe we carry spares for this particular bearing."

Henry Belt shook his head sadly. "Mr. Ostrander, do you recall my statement at the beginning of this voyage, that you six gentlemen are totally responsible for the navigation of the ship?"

"Yes, sir. But—"

"This is an applicable situation. You must either repair the computer, or perform the calculations yourself."

"Very well, sir. I will do my best."

CHAPTER 5

LYNCH, Verona, Ostrander and Sutton disassembled the mechanism, removed the worn bearing. "Confounded antique!" said Lynch. "Why can't they give us decent equipment? Or if they want to kill us, why not shoot us and save us all trouble."

"We're not dead yet," said Verona. "You've looked for a spare?"

"Naturally. There's nothing remotely like this."

Verona looked at the bearing dubiously. "I suppose we could cast a babbitt sleeve and machine it to fit. That's what we'll have to do—unless you fellows are awfully fast with your math."

Sutton glanced out the port, quickly turned away his eyes. "I wonder if we should cut sail."

"Why?" asked Ostrander.

"We don't want to build up too much velocity. We're already going 30 miles a second."

"Mars is a long way off."

"And if we miss, we go shooting past. Then where are we?"

"Sutton, you're a pessimist. A shame to find morbid tendencies in one so young." This from von Gluck.

"I'd rather be a live pessimist than a dead comedian."

The new sleeve was duly cast, machined and fitted. Anxiously the alignment of the data disks was checked. "Well," said Verona dubiously, "there's wobble. How much that affects the functioning remains to be seen. We can take some of it out by shimming the mount. . . ."

Shims of tissue paper were inserted and the wobble seemed to be reduced. "Now—feed in the data," said Sutton. "Let's see how we stand."

Coordinates were fed into the system; the indicator swung. "Enlarge sail cant four degrees," said von Gluck; "we're making too much left concentric. Projected course . . ." he tapped buttons, watched the bright line extend across the screen, swing around a dot representing the center of gravity of Mars. "I make it an elliptical pass, about twenty thousand miles out. That's at present acceleration, and it should toss us right back at Earth."

"Great. Simply great. Let's go, 25!" This was Lynch. "I've heard of guys dropping flat on their faces and kissing Earth when they put down. Me, I'm going to live in a cave the rest of my life."

Sutton went to look at the data disks. The wobble was slight but perceptible. "Good Lord," he said huskily. "The other end of the shaft is loose too."

Lynch started to spit curses; Verona's shoulders slumped. "Let's get to work and fix it."

* * *

ANOTHER bearing was cast, machined, polished, mounted. The disks wobbled, scraped. Mars, another disk, shouldered ever closer in from the side. With the computer unreliable the cadets calculated and plotted the course manually. The results were at slight but significant variance with those of the computer. The cadets looked dourly at each other. "Well," growled Ostrander, "There's error. Is it the instruments? The calculation? The plotting? Or the computer?"

Culpepper said in a subdued voice, "Well, we're not about to crash head-on at any rate."

Verona went back to study the computer. "I can't imagine why the bearings don't work better. . . . The mounting brackets—could they have shifted?" He removed the side housing, studied

the frame, then went to the case for tools.

"What are you going to do?" demanded Sutton.

"Try to ease the mounting brackets around. I think that's our trouble."

"Leave me alone! You'll bugger the machine so it'll never work."

Verona paused, looked questioningly around the group. "Well? What's the verdict?"

"Maybe we'd better check with the old man," said Ostrander nervously.

"All well and good—but you know what he'll say."

"Let's deal cards. Ace of spades goes to ask him."

Culpepper received the ace. He knocked on Henry Belt's door. There was no response. He started to knock again, but restrained himself.

He returned to the group. "Wait till he shows himself. I'd rather crash into Mars than bring forth Henry Belt and his red book."

The ship crossed the orbit of Mars well ahead of the looming red planet. It came toppling at them with a peculiar clumsy grandeur, a mass obviously bulky and globular, but so fine and clear was the detail, so absent the perspective, that the distance and size might have been anything. Instead of swinging in a sharp elliptical curve back toward

Earth, the ship swerved aside in a blunt hyperbola and proceeded outward, now at a velocity of close to fifty miles a second. Mars receded astern and to the side. A new part of space lay ahead. The sun was noticeably smaller. Earth could no longer be differentiated from the stars. Mars departed quickly and politely, and space seemed lonely and forlorn.

HENRY BELT had not appeared for two days. At last Culpepper went to knock on the door—once, twice, three times: a strange face looked out. It was Henry Belt, face haggard, skin like pulled taffy. His eyes were red and glared, his hair seemed matted and more unkempt than hair a quarter-inch long should be.

But he spoke in his quiet clear voice. "Mr. Culpepper, your merciless din has disturbed me. I am quite put out with you."

"Sorry, sir. We feared that you were ill."

Henry Belt made no response. He looked past Culpepper, around the circle of faces. "You gentlemen are unwontedly serious. Has this presumptive illness of mine caused you all distress?"

Sutton spoke in a rush, "The computer is out of order."

"Why then, you must repair it."

"It's a matter of altering the

housing. If we do it incorrectly —"

"Mr. Sutton, please do not harass me with the hour-by-hour minutiae of running the ship."

"But, sir, the matter has become serious; we need your advice. We missed the Mars turnaround—"

"Well, I suppose there's always Jupiter. Must I explain the basic elements of astrogation to you?"

"But the computer's out of order—definitely."

"Then, if you wish to return to Earth, you must perform the calculations with pencil and paper. Why is it necessary to explain the obvious?"

"Jupiter is a long way out," said Sutton in a shrill voice. "Why can't we just turn around and go home?" This last was almost a whisper.

"I see I've been too easy on you cads," said Henry Belt. "You stand around idly; you chatter nonsense while the machinery goes to pieces and the ship flies at random. Everybody into space-suits for sail inspection. Come now. Let's have some snap. What are you all? Walking corpses? You, Mr. Culpepper, why the delay?"

"It occurred to me, sir, that we are approaching the asteroid belt. As I am chief of the watch I consider it my duty to cant sail to swing us around the area."

"You may do this; then join the rest in hull and sail inspection."

"Yes, sir."

The cadets donned space-suits, Sutton with the utmost reluctance. Out into the dark void they went, and now here was loneliness indeed.

When they returned, Henry Belt had returned to his compartment.

"As Mr. Belt points out, we have no great choice," said Oslander. "We missed Mars, so let's hit Jupiter. Luckily it's in good position—otherwise we'd have to swing out to Saturn or Uranus—"

"They're off behind the sun," said Lynch. "Jupiter's our last chance."

"Let's do it right then. I say, let's make one last attempt to set those confounded bearings. . . ."

But now it seemed as if the wobble and twist had been eliminated. The disks tracked perfectly, the accuracy monitor glowed green.

"Great!" yelled Lynch. "Feed it the dope. Let's get going! All sail for Jupiter: Good Lord, but we're having a trip!"

"Wait till it's over," said Sutton. Since his return from sail inspection, he had stood to one side, cheeks pinched, eyes staring. "It's not over yet. And maybe it's not meant to be."

The other five pretended not to have heard him. The computer spat out figures and angles. There was a billion miles to travel. Acceleration was less, due to the diminution in the intensity of sunlight. At least a month must pass before Jupiter came close.

CHAPTER 6

THE ship, great sail spread to the fading sunlight, fled like a ghost—out, always out. Each of the cadets had quietly performed the same calculation, and arrived at the same result. If the swing around Jupiter were not performed with exactitude, if the ship were not slung back like a stone on a string, there was nothing beyond. Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, Pluto were far around the sun; the ship, speeding at a hundred miles a second, could not be halted by the waning gravity of the sun, nor yet sufficiently accelerated in a concentric direction by sail and jet into a true orbit. The very nature of the sail made it useless as a brake, always the thrust was outward.

Within the hull seven men lived and thought, and the psychic relationship worked and stirred like yeast in a vat of decaying fruit. The fundamental similarity, the human identity of the seven men, was utterly canceled; apparent only were the

disparaties. Each cadet appeared to others only as a walking characteristic, and Henry Belt was an incomprehensible Thing, who appeared from his compartment at unpredictable times, to move quietly here and there with the blind blank grin of an archaic Attic hero.

Jupiter loomed and bulked. The ship, at last within reach of the Jovian gravity, sidled over to meet it. The cadets gave ever more careful attention to the computer, checking and counter-checking the instructions. Verona was the most assiduous at this, Sutton the most harassed and ineffectual. Lynch growled and cursed and sweat; Ostrander complained in a thin peevish voice. Von Gluck worked with the calm of pessimistic fatalism; Culpepper seemed unconcerned, almost debonair, a blandness which bewildered Ostrander, infuriated Lynch, awoke a malignant hate in Sutton. Verona and von Gluck on the other hand seemed to derive strength and refreshment from Culpepper's placid acceptance of the situation. Henry Belt said nothing. Occasionally he emerged from his compartment, to survey the wardroom and the cadets with the detached interest of a visitor to an asylum.

It was Lynch who made the discovery. He signaled it with an odd growl of sheer dismay, which

brought a resonant questioning sound from Sutton. "My God, my God, muttered Lynch.

Verona was at his side. "What's the trouble?"

"Look. This gear. When we replaced the disks we de-phased the whole apparatus one notch. This white dot and this other white dot should synchronize. They're one sprocket apart. All the results would check and be consistent because they'd all be off by the same factor."

VERONA sprang into action. Off came the housing, off came various components. Gently he lifted the gear, set it back into correct alignment. The other cadets leaned over him as he worked, except Culpepper who was chief of the watch.

Henry Belt appeared. "You gentlemen are certainly diligent in your navigation," he said presently. "Perfectionists almost."

"We do our best," greeted Lynch between set teeth. "It's a damn shame sending us out with a machine like this."

The red book appeared. "Mr. Lynch, I mark you down not for your private sentiments, which are of course yours to entertain, but for voicing them and thereby contributing to an unhealthy atmosphere of despairing and hysterical pessimism."

A tide of red crept up from

Lynch's neck. He bent over the computer, made no comment. But Sutton suddenly cried out, "What else do you expect from us? We came out here to learn, not to suffer, or to fly on forever!" He gave a ghastly laugh. Henry Belt listened patiently. "Think of it!" cried Sutton. "The seven of us. In this capsule, forever!"

"I am afraid that I must charge you two demerits for your outburst, Mr. Sutton. A good space-man maintains his dignity at all costs."

Lynch looked up from the computer. "Well, now we've got a corrected reading. Do you know what it says?"

Henry Belt turned him a look of polite inquiry.

"We're going to miss," said Lynch. "We're going to pass by just as we passed Mars. Jupiter is pulling us around and sending us out toward Gemini."

The silence was thick in the room. Henry Belt turned to look at Culpepper, who was standing by the porthole, photographing Jupiter with his personal camera.

"Mr. Culpepper?"

"Yes, sir."

"You seem unconcerned by the prospect which Mr. Sutton has set forth."

"I hope it's not imminent."

"How do you propose to avoid it?"

"I imagine that we will radio for help, sir."

"You forget that I have destroyed the radio."

"I remember noting a crate marked 'Radio Parts' stored in the starboard jet-pod."

"I am sorry to disillusion you, Mr. Culpepper. That case is mislabeled."

OSTRANDER jumped to his feet, left the wardroom. There was the sound of moving crates. A moment of silence. Then he returned. He glared at Henry Belt. "Whiskey, Bottles of whiskey."

Henry Belt nodded. "I told you as much."

"But now we have no radio," said Lynch in an ugly voice.

We never have had a radio, Mr. Lynch. You were warned that you would have to depend on your own resources to bring us home. You have failed, and in the process doomed me as well as yourself. Incidentally, I must mark you all down ten demerits for a faulty cargo check."

"Demerits," said Ostrander in a bleak voice.

"Now, Mr. Culpepper," said Henry Belt. "What is your next proposal?"

"I don't know, sir."

Verona spoke in a placatory voice. "What would you do, sir, if you were in our position?"

Henry Belt shook his head.

"I am an imaginative man, Mr. Verona, but there are certain leaps of the mind which are beyond my powers." He returned to his compartment.

Von Gluck looked curiously at Culpepper. "It is a fact. You're not at all concerned."

"Oh, I'm concerned. But I believe that Mr. Belt wants to get home too. He's too good a spaceman not to know exactly what he's doing."

The door from Henry Belt's compartment slid back. Henry Belt stood in the opening. "Mr. Culpepper, I chanced to overhear your remark, and I now note down ten demerits against you. This attitude expresses a complacency as dangerous as Mr. Sutton's utter funk. He looked about the room. "Pay no heed to Mr. Culpepper. He is wrong. Even if I could repair this disaster, I would not raise a hand. For I expect to die in space."

CHAPTER 7

THE sail was canted vectorless, edgewise to the sun. Jupiter was a smudge astern. There were five cadets in the wardroom. Culpepper, Verona, and von Gluck sat talking in low voices. Ostrander and Lynch lay crouched, arms to knees, faces to the wall. Sutton had gone two days before. Quietly donning his space-suit he had stepped into the

exit chamber and thrust himself headlong into space. A propulsion unit gave him added speed, and before any of the cadets could intervene he was gone.

Shortly thereafter Lynch and Ostrander succumbed to inanition, a kind of despondent helplessness: manic-depression in its most stupefying phase. Culpepper the suave, Verona the pragmatic and von Gluck the sensitive, remained.

They spoke quietly to themselves, out of earshot of Henry Belt's room. "I still believe," said Culpepper, "that somehow there is a means to get ourselves out of this mess, and that Henry Belt knows it."

Verona said, "I wish I could think so. . . . We've been over it a hundred times. If we set sail for Saturn or Neptune or Uranus, the outward vector of thrust plus the outward vector of our momentum will take us far beyond Pluto before we're anywhere near. The plasma jets could stop us if we had enough energy, but the shield can't supply it and we don't have another power source. . . ."

Von Gluck hit his fist into his hand. "Gentlemen," he said in a soft delighted voice. "I believe we have sufficient energy at hand. We will use the sail. Remember? It is bellied. It can function as a mirror. It spreads five square miles of surface. Sunlight out

here is thin—but so long as we collect enough of it—”

“I understand!” said Culpepper. “We back off the hull till the reactor is at the focus of the sail and turn on the jets!”

Verona said dubiously, “We’ll still be receiving radiation pressure. And what’s worse, the jets will impinge back on the sail. Effect—cancellation. We’ll be nowhere.”

“If we cut the center out of the sail—just enough to allow the plasma through—we’d beat that objection. And as for the radiation pressure—we’ll surely do better with the plasma drive.”

“What do we use to make plasma?” We don’t have the stock.”

“Anything that can be ionized. The radio, the computer, your shoes, my shirt, Culpepper’s camera, Henry Belt’s whiskey. . . .”

CHAPTER 8

THE angel-wagon came up to meet Sail 25, in orbit beside Sail 40, which was just making ready to take out a new crew.

The cargo carrier drifted near, eased into position. Three men sprang across space to Sail 40, a few hundred yards behind 25, tossed lines back to the carrier, pulled bales of cargo and equipment across the gap.

The five cadets and Henry Belt, clad in space-suits, stepped out into the sunlight. Earth

spread below, green and blue, white and brown, the contours so precious and dear to bring tears to the eyes. The cadets transferring cargo to Sail 40 gazed at them curiously as they worked. At last they were finished, and the six men of Sail 25 boarded the carrier.

BACK safe and sound, eh Henry?” said the pilot. “Well, I’m always surprised.”

Henry Belt made no answer. The cadets stowed their cargo, and standing by the port, took a final look at Sail 25. The carrier retro-jetted; the two sails seemed to rise above them.

The lighter nosed in and out of the atmosphere, braking, extended its wings, glided to an easy landing on the Mojave Desert.

The cadets, their legs suddenly loose and weak to the unaccustomed gravity, limped after Henry Belt to the carry-all, seated themselves and were conveyed to the administration complex. They alighted from the carry-all, and now Henry Belt motioned the five to the side.

“Here, gentlemen, is where I leave you. Tonight I will check my red book and prepare my official report. But I believe I can present you an unofficial resumé of my impressions. Mr. Lynch and Mr. Ostrander, I feel that you are ill-suited either for command or for any situation

which might inflict prolonged emotional pressure upon you. I cannot recommend you for space-duty.

"Mr. von Gluck, Mr. Culpepper and Mr. Verona, all of you meet my minimum requirements for a recommendation, although I shall write the words 'Especially Recommended' only beside the names 'Clyde von Gluck' and 'Marcus Verona'. You brought the sail back to Earth by essentially faultless navigation.

"So now our association ends. I trust you have profited by it." Henry Belt nodded briefly to each of the five and limped off around the building.

The cadets looked after him. Culpepper reached in his pocket and brought forth a pair of small metal objects which he displayed in his palm. "Recognize these?"

"Hmf," said Lynch in a flat voice. "Bearings for the computer disks. The original ones."

"I found them in the little spare parts tray. They weren't there before."

Von Gluck nodded. "The machinery always seemed to fail immediately after sail check, as I recall."

"Lynch drew in his breath with a sharp hiss. He turned, strode away. Ostrander followed him. Culpepper shrugged. To Verona he gave one of the bearings, to von Gluck the other. "For souvenirs—or medals. You fellows deserve them."

"Thanks, Ed," said von Gluck.

"Thanks," muttered Verona. "I'll make a stick-pin of this thing."

The three, not able to look at each other, glanced up into the sky where the first stars of twilight were appearing, then continued on into the building where family and friends and sweethearts awaited them.

THE END

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***Every culture has its ritual festivals, rooted
in the great events of history.***

Is this the form of future fertility rites?

AT the end of the season of sorrows comes the time of rejoicing. Spring, like the hands of a well-oiled clock, noiselessly indicates this time. The average days of dimness and moisture decrease steadily in number, and those of brilliance and cool air begin to enter the calendar again. And it is good that the wet times are behind us, for they rust and corrode our machinery; they require the most intense standards of hygiene.

With all the bright baggage of Spring, the days of the Festival arrive. After the season of Lamentations come the sacred stations of the Passion, then the bright Festival of Resurrection, with its tinkle and clatter, its exhaust fumes, scorched rubber, clouds of dust, and its great promise of happiness.

We come here every year, to the place, to replicate a classic. We see with our own lenses the functioning promise of our crea-



Illustrated by SUMMERS

tion. The time is today, and I have been chosen.

Here on the sacred grounds of Le Mans I will perform every action of the classic which has been selected. Before the finale I will have duplicated every movement and every position which we know occurred. How fortunate! How high the honor!

Last year many were chosen, but it was not the same. Their level of participation was lower. Still, I had wanted so badly to be chosen! I had wished so strongly that I, too, might stand beside the track and await the flaming Mercedes.

But I was saved for this greater thing, and all lenses are upon me as we await the start. This

year there is only one Car to watch—number 4, the Ferrari-analog.

THE sign has been given, and the rubber screams; the smoke balloons like a giant cluster of white grapes, and we are moving. Another car gives way, so that I can drop into the proper position. There are many cars, but only one Car.

We scream about the turn, in this great Italian classic of two centuries ago. We run them all here, at the place, regardless of where they were held originally.

"Oh gone masters of creation," I pray, "let me do it properly. Let my timing be accurate. Let no random variable arise to destroy a perfect replication."

The dull gray metal of my arms, my delicate gyroscopes, my special gripping-hands, all hold the wheel in precisely the proper position, as we roar into the straightaway.

How wise the ancient masters were! When they knew they must destroy themselves in a combat too mystical and holy for us to understand, they left us these ceremonies, in commemoration of the Great Machine. All the data was there: the books, the films, all; for us to find, study, learn, to know the sacred Action.

As we round another turn, I think of our growing cities, our vast assembly lines, our lube-

bars, and our beloved executive computer. How great all things are! What a well-ordered day! How fine to have been chosen!

The tires, little brothers, cry out, and the pinging of small stones comes from beneath. Three-tenths of a second, and I shall depress the accelerator an eighth of an inch further.

R-7091 waves to me as I enter the second lap, but I cannot wave back. My finest functioning is called for at this time. All the special instrumentation which has been added to me will be required in a matter of seconds.

The other cars give way at precisely the right instant. I turn, I slide. I crash through the guard rail.

"Turn over now, please!" I pray, twisting the wheel, "and burn."

Suddenly we are rolling, skidding, upside-down. Smoke fills the car.

To the crashing noise that roars within my receptors, the crackle and lick of flames is now added.

My steel skeleton—collapsed beneath the impact-stresses. My lubricants—burning. My lenses, all but for a tiny area—shattered.

My hearing-mechanism still functions weakly.

Now there is a great horn sounding, and metal bodies rush across the fields.

Now. Now is the time for me to turn off all my functions and cease.

But I will wait. Just a moment longer. I must hear them say it.

Metal arms drag me from the pyre. I am laid aside. Fire extinguishers play white rivers upon the Car.

Dimly, in the distance, through my smashed receptors, I hear the speaker rumble:

"Von Trips has smashed! The Car is dead!"

A great sound of lamenting arises from the rows of unmoving spectators. The giant fire-proof van arrives on the field, just as the attendants gain control of the flames.

Four tenders leap out and raise the Car from the ground. A fifth

collects every smouldering fragment.

And I see it all!

"Oh, let this not be blasphemy, please!" I pray. "One instant more!"

Tenderly, the Car is set within the van. The great doors close.

The van moves, slowly, bearing off the dead warrior, out through the gates, up the great avenue, and past the eager crowds.

To the great smelter. The Melting Pot!

To the place where it will be melted down, then sent out, a piece used to grace the making of each new person.

A cry of unanimous rejoicing arises on the avenue.

It is enough, that I have seen all this!

Happily, I turn myself off.

THE END

As a service to aspiring authors we publish the following announcement:

INERTIA, an amateur magazine, is sponsoring THE FIRST ANNUAL PHANN FICTION CONTEST. Rules for entering are:

1. Anyone may enter as long as he or she has never before appeared professionally.
2. All entries will become the property of PHANN Publications and none will be returned.
3. Stories submitted must be done so under the writer's legal name. Pseudonym's will be permitted only if the author's real name and address is included with the entry.
4. Only one entry will be permitted per person.
5. Stories must be science fiction or fantasy, from 400 to 5,000 words in length.
6. All entries must be typed, double-spaced, on one side of 8½ x 11 paper; preferably mailed flat in large envelopes, though folded entries in legal-sized envelopes will be accepted.
7. Deadline is Midnight September 30th, 1962.
8. Judges' decisions will be final.
9. Winners will be announced sometime during October. A list of the winners will be sent to all those who include a stamped, self-addressed envelope with their entry.
10. There will be three grand prizes, all of which will receive special awards, plus having the chance for professional publication.
11. There will also be five honorable mentions, these to receive certificates so stating, and their stories to be published in a special magazine called STF annual #1.
12. All entries and correspondence concerning the contest should be sent to: STORY CONTEST, PHANN PUBLICATIONS, 36026 CENTER RIDGE ROAD, NORTH RIDGEVILLE, OHIO.

C. L. MOORE:

Catherine The Great

E HOFFMAN PRICE, famed pulp magazine writer of the 1930's, never tires of telling anecdotes regarding the remarkable Farnsworth Wright, editor of WEIRD TALES, who either discovered or helped develop a third of today's great names in fantasy fiction. Farnsworth Wright would invariably "dig into his desk, and thrust a manuscript at me," Price recalled. "The accompanying sales talk would have made the hypothetical Man from Mars mistake me for the prospective purchaser, and Farnsworth for the author's agent!"

"But the highest peak was reached," Price remembered, "in 1933, when he handed me a manuscript by one C. L. Moore.

"And that did take my breath. For Christ's sake, Plato (a nickname for Wright), who is C. L.

Moore? He, she, or it is colossal! This, of all times, was when my enthusiasm equalled Farnsworth's. He quit work and we declared a C. L. Moore Day."

Shamblau, the story responsible for a new editorial holiday, appeared in the Nov., 1933, issue of WEIRD TALES. Wright

led off the issue with the story and the impact on the readership was every bit as great as he anticipated. One of the most enthusiastic reactions came from the pen of the man Wright characterized as "the dean of weird fiction writers," H. P. Lovecraft, who wrote: "*Shamblau*

is great stuff. It begins *magnificently*, on just the right note of terror, and with black intimations of the unknown. The subtle evil of the Entity, as suggested by the unexplained horror of the people, is extremely powerful—and the



description of the Thing itself when unmasked is no letdown. It has real atmosphere and tension—rare things amidst the pulp traditions of brisk, cheerful, staccato prose and lifeless stock characters and images. The one major fault is the conventional interplanetary setting.”

Shambleau was a triumph of imagination, but beyond that it was a “first” story of such consummate story-telling skill as to place its author among the pulp fantasy greats of the era. It introduced Northwest Smith, a scarred space outlaw, as fast with the ray blaster as his prototypes in the Old West had been with the six shooter. Smith rescues a strange brown girl from a Martian mob and takes her to his lodgings. When she unloosens her turban, instead of hair, a cascade of worm-like tendrils falls like a cloak almost to her feet. Despite his revulsion, he is seduced by her allure. Buried in her Medusan coils of loathsome horror, he experiences a sensuality that threatens his life force. The intervention of his Venusian friend Yarol saves him from ecstatic oblivion.

THE instinctive story teller’s sense of pace, the superb characterization, the richness of language and imagery, and the provocative sexual undertones, all

superbly handled, underscored a talent of a very high order. Lovecraft was wrong when he said the interplanetary setting intruded. To the contrary, in *Shambleau*, as well as in the Northwest Smith stories that followed, the setting on Mars and Venus made the extraordinary happenings far more believable than if they had occurred on Earth. Lovecraft himself, in his later years, leaned increasingly heavily upon the science-fiction format to give his horror themes reality.

The fact that C. L. Moore was a woman was carefully kept from the readers of *WEIRD TALES*. Farnsworth Wright may or may not have been aware of the fact since Moore submitted the story without comment. Her sex was revealed by columnists Julius Schwartz and Mort Weisinger, writing in the May, 1934 issue of *THE FANTASY FAN*, an amateur publication devoted to the fantastic in literature. Since *THE FANTASY FAN* never topped 60 in circulation, the news was slow in being passed along through the grapevine. The editors frequently used the term “the author” when they referred to C. L. Moore, which seemed to indicate that they were aware of her sex but avoiding revealing it. While there had been many brilliant women writers of the *supernatural* previously—Mary Wilkens

Freeman, May Sinclair, Gertrude Atherton, Elizabeth Bowen and Edith Wharton among them—C. L. Moore was to become the most important member of her sex to contribute to *science fiction* since Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley wrote *Frankenstein*.

BORN Jan. 24, 1911, in Indianapolis, Catherine Lucille Moore claims to have been in training for a writing career ever since she could communicate. "As soon as I could talk," she recalls, "I began telling long, obscure tales to everyone I could corner. When I learned to write I wrote them, and have been at it ever since . . .

"I was reared on a diet of Greek mythology, Oz books and Edgar Rice Burroughs, so you see I never had a chance. Nothing used to daunt my ambition. I wrote about cowboys and kings, Robin Hoods and Lancelots and Tarzans thinly disguised under other names. This went on for years and years, until one rainy afternoon in 1931 when I succumbed to a lifelong temptation and bought a magazine called *AMAZING STORIES* whose cover portrayed six-armed men in a battle to the death (*Awlo of Ulm* by Capt. S. P. Meek, Sept., 1931). A whole new field of literature opened out before my admiring gaze, and the urge to imitate it was irresistible."

Both C. L. Moore's parents traced their family tree in this country back before the American Revolution and originally derived from Scottish-Irish-Welsh extraction. (A Scottish-Gaelic background is given to James Douglas, hero of *There Shall Be Darkness* (ASTOUNDING SCIENCE-FICTION, Feb., 1942) as well as a penchant for Scottish ballads, on a Martian harp, transposed to Venusian melodies.) Her maternal grandfather was a Methodist minister, and her father's father was a doctor. Her father designed and manufactured machine tools.

Illness plagued what would otherwise have been a very happy childhood, interrupting C. L. Moore's schooling so drastically on several occasions that private tutoring was necessary. Poor health continued through her teen years, curtailing her social life and forcing her to create her private dream worlds on paper.

WHEN Catherine entered Indiana University, her health had improved. An attractive brunette, she was a popular date who favored formal dances, and considered a chow mein dinner the epitome of culinary delights. At that time Forrest J. Ackerman, a frequent correspondent and one-time collaborator observed: "Catherine The Great", toast of *WEIRD TALES*, is two per-

sons! One, an austere, introspective, enigmatic woman; the other, a charming, disarming, gay young girl."

As a girl Catherine had frank likes and dislikes. Among fantasy authors she preferred H. P. Lovecraft, Robert E. Howard, Edgar Rice Burroughs and Edward E. Smith. Her other delights included peach brandy, the odor of gasoline, Slavic cheek bones and stamps. She turned thumbs down on spinach and castor oil and was handicapped in music appreciation by being tone deaf.

THE depression forced her out of college after only a year and a half, and in 1930 she went to work as a secretary in an Indianapolis bank. After closing hours, she would sit on a balcony overlooking the main floor and write fiction. Her first professional try was aimed at AMAZING STORIES, (according to an item in *Weird Whisperings*, a news column by Mort Weisinger and Julius Schwartz which appeared in the Sept., 1934 issue of THE FANTASY FAN) and was rejected by editor T. O'Connor Sloane. They reported that she agreed the piece deserved to be turned down and the effort went into her archives and was never seen again.

Northwest Smith first took form in her mind as a Western

gunman in a ranch called the Bar-Nothing. The passing years have blurred Moore's recollections of the submission history of *Shambleau*. However, there was an early report so precise in Mortimer Weisinger's *The Ether Vibrates* column (FANTASY MAGAZINE, Sept., 1934) that it must be seriously considered. It read: "C. L. Moore first submitted her 'Northwest' Smith stories to WONDER (Stories) on June 8, 1933. They were rejected six days later—only because of their weird theme."

She was only 22 when Farnsworth Wright accepted and published *Shambleau*. The finished craftsmanship of that story leaves little reason to doubt her claim that 15 years of continuous writing for her own pleasure developed the artistry which made her an instantaneous success. Moore recalls that Farnsworth Wright bounced only one story of hers, the second submission. This may have been *Werewoman*, a Northwest Smith story that has never appeared professionally. It was published in the Winter 1938-39 issue of LEAVES, a mimeographed fan magazine edited and stenciled by R. H. Barlow. Unlike the other Northwest Smith stories, it is neither science fiction nor science-fantasy, but an outright weird-fantasy set in a never-never land. Here, a wounded

Northwest Smith on an unnamed world, fleeing from unspecified assailants, is surrounded by a pack of female werewolves. The wolf leader feels an affinity of spirit with him and saves him from death at the hands of her pack. In episodes of sheer dream fantasy they range timelessly through a valley where a forgotten people, bound by an ancient curse, still carry on a ghost-like existence. Northwest Smith destroys a gravestone from which emanates the vapors that hold the valley in thrall and returns to the "real" world, an enigma to a group of men who find him.

THE second published Northwest Smith story, *Black Thirst*, appearing in the April, 1934 WEIRD TALES, delineated the special qualities of the lead character ever more sharply than *Shambleau*. His reactions to the menace of the Minga castle on Venus, where girls are selectively bred for their beauty; his conviction that his ray blaster will take care of anything supernatural (which is justified, as he eventually succeeds in destroying Alendar, last of an ancient race that feeds on beauty) clearly illuminates his special qualities for the reader. A hint that the author might be a woman is present when Alendar turns to Northwest Smith and says: "I realized then how

long it had been since I tasted the beauty of man. It is so rare, so different from female beauty, that I had all but forgotten it existed. And you have it, very subtly, in a raw, harsh way . . . behind your animal shell of self-preservation are depths of that force and strength which nourish the roots of male beauty."

Scarlet Dream, which followed (WEIRD TALES, May, 1934) is really a dream fantasy, but its tableau of a land where the grass sucks vampire-like at the feet of those who walk on it; where the only food is a liquid which tastes of blood drunk from spigots in a temple; and the only purpose of the people is to wait for the interdimensional horror who controls the bizarre place to come and feed on them, make it one of the most memorable stories in the series. *Dust of Gods* (Aug., 1934 WEIRD TALES), swung the pendulum back towards a purer form of a science-fiction as Northwest Smith and his Venusian friend Yarol search Martian labyrinths to uncover the secrets of ancient "gods" who fled to Mara when their world exploded.

All but the last-mentioned tale scored first place with the readers of WEIRD TALES in competition with superb works by Robert E. Howard, Clark Ashton Smith, E. Hoffman Price, Jack Williamson, Frank Belknap Long and Edmond Hamilton, forcing

Farnsworth Wright to raise his sights in his blurb for *The Black God's Kiss* (WEIRD TALES, October, 1934) and rank her with "Algernon Blackwood, Arthur Machen and H. P. Lovecraft."

The Black God's Kiss introduced Jirel of Joiry, a female warrior queen and spitfire of the 15th century, who when captured and humbled by the conqueror Guillaume, escapes to a land of horror in another dimension, to kiss a black image and pass that kiss on to Guillaume, causing his death. As she views his body, she realizes that "the heady violence" that had possessed her every time she thought of him was inspired by love and not hate, and in buying her revenge she had paid a bitter fee.

C. L. Moore's introduction to the science-fiction magazines was upon the invitation of F. Orin Tremaine, who had taken over ASTOUNDING STORIES and in a single year raised it to leadership in its field. The presentation of *Bright Illusion* in the Oct., 1934 issue of his magazine was a coup.

In *Bright Illusion*, an Earthman is whisked to another world by a powerful intelligence to overthrow a competing entity who has set itself up as a god. To permit the Earthman to operate functionally, he is provided with an illusion which casts the crea-

tures and structures of this world in familiar form. He falls in love with an alien counterpart of a female, which love is mutually sustained even when both are aware of their true forms. Eventually they choose death as the only way out of their hopeless situation. Science-fantasy, rather than science-fiction, the story nonetheless appealed to the readership of ASTOUNDING STORIES strongly enough to establish a new reputation for the author in that magazine. In the next few years *Greater Glories* and *Tryst of Time*, tales of a similar stripe, found favor with the readers.

The procession of literary triumphs also continued in WEIRD TALES as C. L. Moore sent Northwest Smith to pit his courage and gun against the soul-challenging entities of the near planets, while Jirel of Joiry, jousting with the supernatural terrors of man's emergence from the dark ages. The procession of stories: *Black God's Shadow*, *Julhi*, *Jirel Meets Magic*, and *The Cold Gray God* were uniformly wondrously woven literary tapestries. But there were also weaknesses. A pattern seemed to evolve wherein Northwest Smith or Jirel of Joiry climaxed each story in the formless haze of spiritual battle with the unknown. The plot situations were rarely solved by a logical sequence of events, but instead by a burst of rhetorical

hypnotism. A story that began as logical science-fiction would be permitted to lapse into fantasy as an easy way out of a difficult situation. A story that began as an outright fantasy would be buttressed by science when the "willing suspension of disbelief" could no longer be sustained.

The battle was always against evil, but the standard of light was championed by a hero and a heroine who were themselves stained with the sins of humanity. For this honesty in characterization, a great deal could be forgiven.

One Jirel of Joiry story, *The Dark Land*, (WEIRD TALES, Jan., 1936) was illustrated by C. L. Moore herself. Ostensibly showing Pav of Romne, Prince of Darkness who desires Jirel for his queen, it actually was drawn many years previous to the writing of *The Dark Land* and once served as the inspiration for the gallant, dead Guillaume of *The Black God's Kiss*.

ROMANCE came often to Northwest Smith and Jirel of Joiry, and it was always a very strange and unusual romance. Now, something of a story-book nature was to happen to C. L. Moore. The March, 1936, WEIRD TALES carried a shocker of a tale titled *The Graveyard Rats* by a science-fiction fan named

Henry Kuttner. Kuttner greatly admired the work of Moore but, shy by nature, he had never had the courage to strike up a correspondence. Professional publication gave him the status he needed, so he sent a letter to WEIRD TALES to be forwarded to Mr. C. L. Moore. The reply from Miss Catherine Moore was a tremendous surprise to him. A native of Los Angeles, Kuttner was then living in New York. On a trip across the country to visit his friends in Los Angeles, he stopped off at Indianapolis and met Miss Moore. Out of this meeting sprang an idea for a collaboration. A story in which Northwest Smith and Jirel of Joiry would be brought together. C. L. Moore had collaborated once before—with Forrest J. Ackerman on *Nymph of Darkness*, a Northwest Smith story published in FANTASY MAGAZINE for April, 1935 and a collector's item today, since it was also illustrated by Moore. In that collaboration, Ackerman had supplied the idea of an invisible girl who enlists Smith's aid, and Moore had done the writing. In this new collaboration, both Moore and Kuttner would share the plotting and the writing.

The result appeared as *Quest of the Star Stone* in the Nov., 1937 WEIRD TALES. Though it won first place in the issue, it was not a very good story, possessing the

previously itemized flaws more glaringly than usual. Through necromancy, a magician brings Northwest Smith and his Venusian friend Yarol back through time to the 15th century, to wrest Jirel a star shone which she wears around her neck. Memorable was the prelude to adventure in which Northwest Smith in a "surprisingly good baritone" expresses the homesickness of his exile through singing *The Green Hills of Earth*, which goes:

*"Across the seas of darkness
The good green Earth is bright,
Oh, star that was my homeland
Shine down on me tonight . . .*

My heart turns home in longing

*Across the voids between,
To know beyond the spaceways
The hills of Earth are green
. . . and count the losses worth
To see across the darkness
The green hills of Earth . . ."*

When Robert Heinlein read the story, he never forgot the phrase and, as a result, titled one of his most famous short stories, and a collection, *The Green Hills of Earth*.

ALTHOUGH Moore and Kuttner hit it off from the start, it was anything but a whirlwind romance. Henry scarcely personi-

fied Northwest Smith. He was slight of build and ordinary in features. Economically, things were anything but conducive to romance. Henry was a beginning writer and the country was in a state of acute depression. Nevertheless, each time he traveled between Los Angeles and New York, Kuttner stopped at Indianapolis. C. L. Moore eventually decided that "Northwest Smith would have been a very boring man to be married to." To the contrary, she pointed out, "Henry Kuttner, as his writing must show and his friends could testify, was wonderfully resourceful, perceptive, fresh in his viewpoints and very, very funny. I think it's his humor that most of us remember most vividly. But he also had a quality of quiet strength and discipline that I have sensed in very few other people and for which I have enormous respect on the few occasions I do encounter it. In this area, I suppose, you could find a likeness between the real man and the fictional one."

They were married June 7, 1940, in New York and lived there about a year. Then they moved to Laguna Beach. When Japan declared war against the United States, Henry Kuttner entered the Medical Corps and was stationed at Fort Monmouth, N. J. Catherine lived at nearby Red Bank from 1942 to 1945.

Ever since their first meeting, new C. L. Moore stories had been few and far between. After the collaboration in *Quest of the Star Stone* only one more Jirel story appeared, *Hellsgarde* in WEIRD TALES for April, 1939. A brief fragment, *Song in Minor Key*, in the fan magazine SCIEN-TI-SNAPS for Feb., 1940 about the return of Northwest Smith to Earth, rang down the curtain on the saga of that character. An era was coming to a close for C. L. Moore. There would be some transition stories, but romance for the sake of romance was dead.

The turning point unquestionably came with *Greater than Gods* in the July, 1939 ASTOUNDING SCIENCE-FICTION, wherein a man is contacted by two probable future worlds with powerful pleas that he take the course that will ensure their reality. The theme is mature and moving, the writing strong and direct. The vitality of the story rests in its emotional conflict, which is not diminished by an ending which has the protagonist take a third course which wipes out the possibility of both of the two "worlds of if."

WHATEVER the reason for her lack of production between 1936 and 1940, the infrequency of the Moore name on stories after the turn of the decade rested in the symbiotic writ-

ing relationship that sprang up between her and her husband. One story told of them most graphically illustrates the method. Henry Kuttner, who became somewhat of a recluse when on a writing binge, had fallen asleep from exhaustion without finishing a story he was working on. Catherine came into the room, read the manuscript, and by the time he awoke the story was completed and on his desk.

He was strong on beginnings, she was powerful on endings. So a specialization grew up where each compensated for the weakness of the other. Some 19 pen names were used, among them Lawrence O'Donnell, Lewis Padgett, C. H. Liddell and Kelvin Kent. Collaborations were so involved that after a while both parties found it impossible to tell where one broke off and the other began.

Still, an occasional story appeared that was nearly 100% C. L. Moore. *There Shall Be Darkness* in ASTOUNDING, Feb., 1942 was one such story. In style this was a throwback to the C. L. Moore of Northwest Smith. The potent Venusian drink *segr-whiskey* (popular beverage of Northwest Smith) also appears in this tale, which parallels the fall of the Roman empire as Earth retreats from the last of her conquest to face the onslaught of interplanetary barbari-

ans. Moore was early in a trend that within a few months would find A. E. van Vogt and Isaac Asimov turning to the concept of interplanetary and interstellar empires that would eventually become a standard theme in science fiction.

The most dramatic and potent transition story by Moore was unquestionably the short novel *Judgement Night* serialized in two parts in *ASTOUNDING* beginning in Aug., 1943. A galactic empire is beginning to crack up, and a princess of the controlling realm courts romance and death on an artificial pleasure satellite which circles her world. The description of the operation of the pleasure satellite Cyrille can only be termed "inspired." The story is composed with richness of imagery reminiscent of Jirel of Joiry, and the plot is carried by action instead of cerebration. But it introduces an anti-war message of noble effectiveness, and presents an alien creature, the Ilar, with the adroitness of a Weinbaum.

From here on there would be very few stories that would not have at least a trace of Henry Kuttner in their composition. Nevertheless, of these she could call her own, *Children's Hour*, published under the pen name of Lawrence O'Donnell (*ASTOUNDING*, March, 1944) concerning a man who discovers that the girl

he is engaged to marry is the chaperoned child of some immeasurably superior race and he is but an educational plaything, is a masterpiece of sensitivity in its handling and memorable in its originality. Few stories in modern science fiction rank above it.

Shortly afterward appeared *No Woman Born*, the tale of the mental adjustment of a beautiful television star, who has been nearly cremated by fire, to the shiny metal machine which is now her body (*ASTOUNDING*, Dec., 1944). Despite the fact that it did not entirely succeed, it is the most ambitious story written to date on that theme. Both *Children's Hour* and *No Woman Born* eliminated physical action as the prime method for furthering the plot.

WHEN the war ended, the Kuttners decided they wanted a very special house at Hastings-on-Hudson, N.Y. With only \$50 between them, they knuckled down and made \$1,000 in writing in one month to provide a down payment. It was at Hastings-on-Hudson that what many consider to be C. L. Moore's greatest story and one of the most brilliant stories in modern science-fiction, was written: *Vintage Season*.

When published under her pen name of Lawrence O'Donnell in

the Sept., 1946 ASTOUNDING, acclaim was spontaneous. In *Vintage Season*, observers from the future return incognito to periods in the past, just before great events are to occur, as tourist observers. They are strictly forbidden to interfere with events. Such a group rents a house in the United States, and their origin is discovered by the owner. Realizing that some tremendous occurrence, possibly a tragedy, is about to occur, he does his best to get them to alter events, to no avail. One of the observers, Cenbe, is a creative genius of the future who takes back to tomorrow the impressions for a great symphonia, blending pictures and sound. The fundamental plot line of this superb story has been copied repeatedly since its first appearance.

With masterpieces like *The Children's Hour* and *Vintage Season* the Lawrence O'Donnell name was being considered with the new hierarchy of science-fiction writing giants such as Heinlein, van Vogt and Sturgeon. Rising with it was the pen name of Lewis Padgett. Revelation of the true identities behind these newly famous names elevated Henry Kuttner's name to the pantheon of the greats, because in effect he had proved himself. That C. L. Moore could accomplish literary feats was taken for

granted. Therefore, except among the cognoscenti, she suffered a net loss of incalculable extent. Through neglect of its use, the C. L. Moore name was known primarily to veteran readers. Lawrence O'Donnell had not been around long enough to establish a comparable reputation; and besides, it was a name only partly employed for her efforts.

HENRY KUTTNER'S heart condition forced the couple to move to the gentler climate of Laguna Beach, Calif. in 1948. In 1950, utilizing the G. I. Bill of Rights, Kuttner decided to get the college degree he wanted. He went to the University of Southern California and graduated in 3½ years. Not subsidized by the G. I. Bill of Rights, Catherine took a bit longer, and obtained her B. A. in 1956. Henry was working for his M.A., and had everything completed but his thesis, when his heart gave out on Feb. 4, 1958. They had both made Phi Beta Kappa, and Catherine had also made *magna cum laude* and Phi Kappa Psi; but the honors seemed empty now.

Toward the end, they had decided to correctly label their stories as individual efforts or collaborations. However, science-fiction was already an unprofitable venture. In the late 1950's they had turned out four novels about a psycho-analyst de-

tective, with Henry writing the first draft and Catherine the final draft. After Henry's death, C. L. Moore published the already completed novel of the strange sociological tyranny of the America of the near future in *Doomsday Morning* (written in a semi-tough guy school of writing) as a Doubleday hardcover. But her efforts were predominantly devoted to television. There were westerns and detectives as well as scripts for such famous shows as *Maverick* and *77 Sunset Strip*. She took over a writing class which Henry had been teaching at the University of California, and taught two mornings a week for four years.

Most of the students probably never realized the true stature of their instructor in the field she had so early chosen as her own. The young girl who blasted her-

self to fame overnight through the good right gun arm of Northwest Smith matured to become one of the most perceptive literary artists the science-fiction world had ever known. Her contributions enriched the field out of proportion to their numbers.

For herself, the 18 years of her marriage, though stranger than most fiction, had been rewarding and happy ones. Her ability in writing had carried her into a promising career. Commenting on the strange twists that life sometimes takes, she said: "No, I never really have meant to do full-time writing. I don't know quite what happened."

* * *

Editor's Note: A profile of the life and works of Henry Kuttner will appear in the October, 1962, issue of AMAZING STORIES.

Through Time and Space With Benedict Breadfruit: VI

On the planet Touphe VI," said Benedict Breadfruit in his address to the members of the Institute for Twenty-First Century Studies, a group specializing in ancient history, "the natives keep time by means of cords which have knots tied along their length at precisely measured intervals. Since the material from which these cords are made is remarkably even in its rate of burning, it is possible to tell the exact hour by noticing how many knots have been burned after one end has been lit."

"What is this remarkable contraption called?" asked one of the members.

"Whay, naturally," said Benedict Breadfruit in his best British accent, "it would be a knot clock."

—GRANDALL BARRETTON

ROGUE PSI

By JAMES H. SCHMITZ

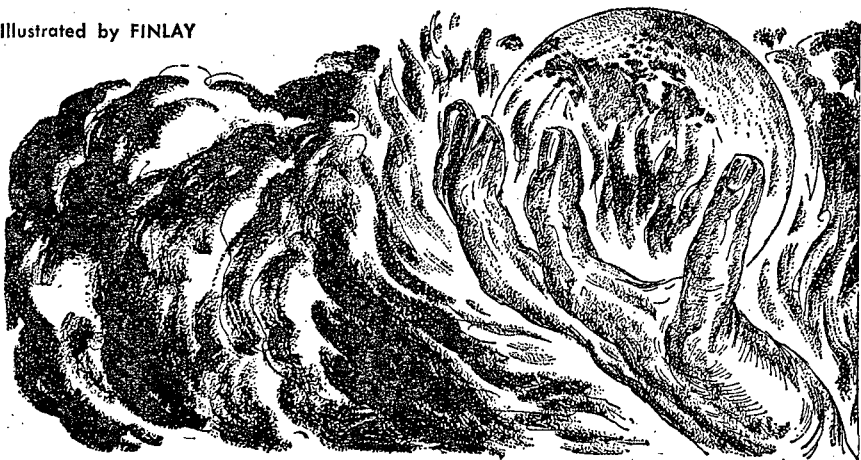
How do you trap a man who has the entire world at his mercy?

SHORTLY after noon, a small side door in the faculty restaurant of Cleaver University opened and a man and a woman stepped out into the sunlight of the wide, empty court between the building and the massive white wall opposite it which bordered Cleaver Spaceport. They came unhurriedly across the court towards a transparent gate sealing a tunnel passage in the wall.

As they reached the center of

the court, a scanning device in the wall fastened its attention on them, simultaneously checking through a large store of previously registered human images and data associated with these. The image approaching it on the left was that of a slender girl above medium height, age twenty-six, with a burnished pile of hair which varied from chestnut-brown to copper in the sun, eyes which appeared to vary between blue and gray, and an air of com-

Illustrated by FINLAY





posed self-reliance. Her name, the scanner noted among other details, was Arlene Marguerite Rolf. Her occupation: micromachinist. Her status: MAY PASS.

Miss Rolf's companion was in his mid-thirties, big, rawboned and red-haired, with a formidably bulging forehead, eyes set deep under rusty beetle-brows, and a slight but apparently habitual scowl. His name was also on record: Dr. Frank Dean Harding. Occupation: marine geologist. Status—

At that point, there was an odd momentary hesitancy or blurring in the scanner's reactions, though not quite pronounced enough to alert its check-mechanisms. Then it decided: MAY NOT PASS. A large sign appeared promptly in brilliant red light on the glassy surface of the wall door.

WARNING—SOMATIC BARRIERS!

*Passage Permitted to Listed
Persons Only*

THE man looked at the sign, remarked dourly, "The welcome mat's out again! Wonder if the monitor in there can identify me as an individual."

"It probably can," Arlene said. "You've been here twice before—"

"Three times," Frank Harding corrected her. "The first occasion was just after I learned you'd taken the veil. Almost two

years now, isn't it?" he asked.

"Very nearly. Anyway, you're registered in the university files, and that's the first place that would be checked for an unlisted person who showed up in this court."

Harding glanced over at her. "They're as careful as all that about Lowry's project?"

"You bet they are," Arlene said. "If you weren't in my company, a guard would have showed up by now to inform you you're approaching a restricted area and ask you very politely what your business here was."

Harding grunted. "Big deal. Is someone assigned to follow you around when you get off the project?"

She shrugged. "I doubt it. Why should they bother? I never leave the university grounds, and any secrets should be safe with me here. I'm not exactly the gabby type, and the people who know me seem to be careful not to ask me questions about Ben Lowry or myself anyway." She looked reflective. "You know, I do believe it's been almost six months since anyone has so much as mentioned diex energy in my presence!"

"Isn't the job beginning to look a little old after all this time?" Harding asked.

"Well," Arlene said, "working with Doctor Ben never gets to be boring, but it is a rather restric-

tive situation, of course. It'll come to an end by and by."

Harding glanced at his watch, said, "Drop me a line when that happens, Arlene. By that time, I might be able to afford an expert micromachinist myself."

"In a dome at the bottom of some ocean basin?" Arlene laughed. "Sounds cosy—but that wouldn't be much of an improvement on Cleaver Spaceport, would it? Will you start back to the coast today?"

"If I can still make the afternoon flight." He took her arm. "Come on. I'll see you through the somatic barrier first."

"Why? Do you think it might make a mistake about me and clamp down?"

"It's been known to happen," Harding said gloomily. "And from what I hear, it's one of the less pleasant ways to get killed."

Arlene said comfortably, "There hasn't been an accident of that kind in at least three or four years. The bugs have been very thoroughly worked out of the things. I go in and out here several times a week." She took a small key from her purse, fitted it into a lock at the side of the transparent door, twisted it and withdrew it. The door slid sideways for a distance of three feet and stopped. Arlene Rolf stepped through the opening and turned to face Harding.

"There you are!" she said.

"Barely a tingle! If it didn't want to pass me, I'd be lying on the ground knotted up with cramps right now. 'By, Frank! See you again in two or three months, maybe?'"

Harding nodded. "Sooner if I can arrange it. Goodby, Arlene."

He stood watching the trim figure walk up the passage beyond the door. As she came to its end, the door slid silently shut again. Arlene looked back and waved at him, then disappeared around the corner.

Dr. Frank Harding thrust his hands into his pockets and started back across the court, scowling absently at nothing.

THE living room of the quarters assigned to Dr. Benjamin B. Lowry on Cleaver Spaceport's security island was large and almost luxuriously furnished. In pronounced contrast to the adjoining office and workrooms, it was also as a rule in a state of comfortable disorder. An affinity appeared to exist between the complex and the man who had occupied it for the past two years. Dr. Lowry, leading authority in the rather new field of diex energy, was a large man of careless and comfortable, if not downright slovenly personal habits, while a fiendish precisionist at work.

He was slumped now in an armchair on the end of his spine,

fingering his lower lip and staring moodily at the viewphone field which formed a pale-yellow rectangle across the living room's entire south wall, projecting a few inches out into the room. Now and then, his gaze shifted to a narrow, three-foot-long case of polished hardwood on the table beside him. When the phone field turned clear white, Dr. Lowry shoved a pair of rimless glasses back over his nose and sat up expectantly. Then he frowned.

"Now look here, Weldon—!" he began.

Colors had played for an instant over the luminous rectangle of the phone field, resolving themselves into a view of another room. A short, sturdily built man sat at a desk there, wearing a neat business suit. He smiled pleasantly out of the field at Dr. Lowry, said in a casual voice, "Relax, Ben! As far as I'm concerned, this is a command performance. Mr. Green just instructed me to let you know I'd be sitting in when he took your call."

"Mr. Green did *what*?"

The man in the business suit said quickly, "He's coming in now, Ben!" His hand moved on the desk, and he and the room about him faded to a pale, colorless outline in the field. Superimposed on it appeared a third room, from which a man who

wore dark glasses looked out at Dr. Lowry.

He nodded, said in a briskly amiable manner, "Dr. Lowry, I received your message just a minute ago. As Colonel Weldon undoubtedly has informed you, I asked him to be present during this discussion. There are certain things to be told you, and the arrangement will save time all around.

"Now, doctor, as I understand it, the situation is this. Your work on the project has advanced satisfactorily up to what has been designated as the Fourth Stage. That is correct, isn't it?"

Dr. Lowry said stiffly, "That is correct, sir. Without the use of a trained telepath it is unlikely that further significant advances can be made. Colonel Weldon, however, has seen fit now to introduce certain new and astonishing conditions. I find these completely unacceptable as they stand and . . ."

"You're entirely justified, Dr. Lowry, in protesting against an apparently arbitrary act of interference with the work you've carried out so devotedly at the request of your government." One of Mr. Green's better-known characteristics was his ability to interrupt without leaving the impression of having done it. "Now, would it satisfy you to know that Colonel Weldon has

been acting throughout as my personal deputy in connection with the project—and that I was aware of the conditions you mention before they were made?”

DR. LOWRY hesitated, said, “I’m afraid not. As a matter of fact, I do know Weldon well enough to take it for granted he wasn’t simply being arbitrary. I . . .”

“You feel,” said Mr. Green, “that there are certain extraneous considerations involved of which you should have been told?”

Lowry looked at him for a moment. “If the President of the United States,” he said drily, “already has made a final decision in the matter, I shall have to accept it.”

The image in the phone field said, “I haven’t.”

“Then,” Lowry said, “I feel it would be desirable to let me judge personally whether any such considerations are quite as extraneous as they might appear to be to . . .”

“To anybody who didn’t himself plan the diex thought projector, supervise its construction in every detail, and carry out an extensive series of preliminary experiments with it,” Mr. Green concluded for him. “Well, yes—you may be right about that, doctor. You are necessarily more aware of the instrument’s final

potentialities than anyone else could be at present.” The image’s mouth quirked in the slightest of smiles. “In any event, we want to retain your ungrudging cooperation, so Colonel Weldon is authorized herewith to tell you in as much detail as you feel is necessary what the situation is. And he will do it before any other steps are taken. Perhaps I should warn you that what you learn may not add to your peace of mind. Now, does that settle the matter to your satisfaction, Dr. Lowry?”

Lowry nodded. “Yes, sir, it does. Except for one detail.”

“Yes, I see. Weldon, will you kindly cut yourself out of this circuit. I’ll call you back in a moment.”

Colonel Weldon’s room vanished from the phone field. Mr. Green went over to a wall safe, opened it with his back to Dr. Lowry, closed it again and turned holding up a small, brightly polished metal disk.

“I should appreciate it incidentally,” he remarked, “if you would find it convenient to supply me with several more of these devices.”

“I’ll be very glad to do it, sir,” Dr. Lowry told him, “after I’ve been released from my present assignment.”

“Yes . . . you take no more chances than we do.” Mr. Green raised his right hand, held the

disk facing the phone field. After a moment, the light in Dr. Lowry's living room darkened, turned to a rich, deep purple, gradually lightened again.

Mr. Green took his hand down. "Are you convinced I'm the person I appear to be?"

Lowry nodded. "Yes, sir, I am. To the best of my knowledge, there is no way of duplicating that particular diex effect—as yet."

ARLENE ROLF walked rapidly along the passage between the thick inner and outer walls enclosing Cleaver Spaceport. There was no one in sight, and the staccato clicking of her high heels on the lightgreen marblite paving was the only sound. The area had the overall appearance of a sun-baked, deserted fortress. She reached a double flight of shallow stairs, went up and came out on a wide, bare platform level with the top of the inner wall.

Cleaver Spaceport lay on her left, a twenty-mile rectangle of softly gleaming marblite absolutely empty except for the narrow white spire of a control tower near the far side. The spaceport's construction had been begun the year Arlene was born, as part of the interplanetary colonization program which a rash of disasters and chronically insufficient funds mean-

while had brought to an almost complete standstill. Cleaver port remained unfinished; no spaceship had yet lifted from its surface or settled down to it.

Ahead and to Arlene's right, a mile and a half of green lawn stretched away below the platform. Automatic tenders moved slowly across it, about half of them haloed by the rhythmically circling rainbow sprays of their sprinklers. In the two years since Arlene had first seen the lawn, no human being had set foot there. At its far end was a cluster of low, functional buildings. There were people in those buildings . . . but not very many people. It was the security island where Dr. Lowry had built the diex projector.

Arlene crossed the platform, passed through the doorless entry of the building beyond it, feeling the tingle of another somatic barrier as she stepped into its shadow. At the end of the short hallway was a narrow door with the words NONSPACE CONDUIT above it. Behind the door was a small, dimly lit cube of a room. Miss Rolf went inside and sat down on one of the six chairs spaced along the walls. After a moment, the door slid quietly shut and the room went dark.

For a period of perhaps a dozen seconds, in complete blackness, Arlene Rolf appeared to

herself to have become an awareness so entirely detached from her body that it could experience no physical sensation. Then light reappeared in the room and sensation returned. She stood up, smoothing down her skirt, and discovered smiling that she had been holding her breath again. It happened each time she went through the conduit, and no previous degree of determination to breathe normally had any effect at all on that automatic reaction. The door opened and she picked up her purse and went out into a hall which was large, well-lit and quite different in every respect from the one by which she had entered.

In the wall screen across the hall, the image of a uniformed man smiled at her and said, "Dr. Lowry has asked that you go directly to the laboratory on your return, Miss Rolf."

"Thank you, Max," she said. She had never seen Max or one of the other project guards in person, though they must be somewhere in the building. The screen went blank, and she went on down the long, windowless hall, the sound of her steps on the thick carpeting again the only break in the quiet. Now, she thought, it was a little like being in an immaculately clean, well-tended but utterly vacant hotel.

ARLENE pressed the buzzer beside the door to Dr. Lowry's quarters and stood waiting. When the door opened, she started forwards then stopped in surprise.

"Why, hello, Colonel Weldon," she said. "I didn't realize you would be on the project today." Her gaze went questioningly past him to Dr. Lowry who stood in the center of the room, hands shoved deep into his trousers pockets.

Lowry said wryly, "Come in, Arlene. This has been a surprise to me, too, and not a pleasant one. On the basis of orders coming directly from the top—which I have just confirmed, by the way—our schedule here is to be subjected to drastic rearrangements. They include among other matters our suspension as the actual operators of the projector."

"But why that?" she asked startled.

Dr. Lowry shrugged. "Ask Ferris. He just arrived by his personal conduit. He's supposed to explain the matter to us."

Ferris Weldon, locking the door behind Arlene, said smilingly, "And please do give me a chance to do just that now, both of you! Let's sit down as a start. Naturally you're angry . . . no one can blame you for it. But I promise to show you the absolute necessity behind this move."

He waited until they were seated, then added, "One reason—though not the only reason—for interrupting your work at this point is to avoid exposing both of you to serious personal danger."

Dr. Lowry stared at him. "And what's that supposed to mean?"

"Ben," Ferris Weldon asked, "what was the stated goal of this project when you undertook it?"

Lowry said stiffly, "To develop a diex-powered instrument which would provide a means of reliable mental communication with any specific individual on Earth."

Weldon shook his head. "No, it wasn't."

Arlene Rolf laughed shortly. "He's right, Ben." She looked at Weldon. "The hypothetical goal of the project was an instrument which would enable your department telepaths to make positive identification of a hypothetical Public Enemy Number One . . . the same being described as a 'rogue telepath' with assorted additional qualifications."

Weldon said, "That's a little different, isn't it? Do you recall the other qualifications?"

"Is that important at the moment?" Miss Rolf asked. "Oh, well . . . this man is also a dangerous and improbably gifted hypnotist. Disturb him with an ordinary telepathic probe or get

physically within a mile or so of him, and he can turn you mentally upside down, and will do it in a flash if it suits his purpose. He's quite ruthless, is supposed to have committed any number of murders. He might as easily be some unknown as a man constantly in the public eye who is keeping his abilities concealed . . . He impersonates people . . . He is largely responsible for the fact that in a quarter of a century the interplanetary colonization program literally hasn't got off the ground. . . ."

She added, "That's as much as I remember. There will be further details in the files. Should I dig them out?"

"No," Ferris Weldon said. "You've covered most of it."

DR. LOWRY interrupted irritably, "What's the point of this rigmarole, Weldon? You aren't assuming that either of us has taken your rogue telepath seriously. . . ."

"Why not?"

Lowry shrugged. "Because he is, of course, one of the government's blandly obvious fictions. I've no objection to such fictions when they serve to describe the essential nature of a problem without revealing in so many words what the problem actually is. In this case, the secrecy surrounding the project could have arisen largely from a concern

about the reaction in various quarters to an instrument which might be turned into a thought-control device."

Weldon asked, "Do you believe that is the purpose of your projector?"

"If I'd believed it, I would have had nothing to do with it. I happen to have considerable confidence in the essential integrity of our government, if not always in its good sense. But not everyone shares that feeling."

Ferris Weldon lit a cigarette, flicked out the match, said after a moment, "But you didn't buy the fiction?"

"Of course not."

Weldon glanced at Miss Rolf. "You, Arlene?"

She looked uneasy. "I hadn't bought it, no. Perhaps I'm not so sure now—you must have some reason for bringing up the matter here. But several things wouldn't make sense. If . . ."

Dr. Lowry interrupted again. "Here's one question, Weldon. If there did happen to be a rogue telepath around, what interest would he have in sabotaging the colonization program?"

Weldon blew two perfect smoke rings, regarded their ascent with an air of judicious approval. "After you've heard a little more you should be able to answer that question yourself," he said. "It was precisely the problems connected with the

program that put us on the rogue's trail. We didn't realize it at the time. Fourteen years ago. . . . Have you had occasion to work with DEDCOM, Ben?"

Lowry made a snorting sound. "I've had a number of occasions . . . and made a point of passing them up! If the government is now basing its conclusions on the fantastically unrealistic mishmash of suggestions it's likely to get from a deducting computer. . . ."

"Well," Ferris Weldon said deprecatingly, "the government doesn't trust DEDCOM too far, of course. Still, the fact that it is strictly logical, encyclopedically informed and not hampered by common sense has produced surprisingly useful results from time to time.

"Now don't get indignant again, Ben! I assure you I'm not being facetious. The fact is that sixteen years ago the charge that interplanetary colonization was being sabotaged was frequently enough raised. It had that appearance from the outside. Whatever could go wrong had gone wrong. There'd been an unbelievable amount of blundering.

NEVERTHELESS, all the available evidence indicated that no organized sabotage was involved. There was plenty of voluble opposition to the pro-

gram, sometimes selfish, sometimes sincere. There were multiple incidents of forgetfulness, bad timing, simple stupidity. After years of false starts, the thing still appeared bogged down in a nightmare of—in the main—honest errors. But expensive ones. The month-by-month cost of continuing reached ridiculous proportions. Then came disasters which wiped out lives by the hundreds. The program's staunchest supporters began to get dubious, to change their minds.

"I couldn't say at the moment which genius in the Department of Special Activities had the notion to feed the colonization problem to DEDCOM. Anyway, it was done, and DEDCOM, after due checking and rumination, not only stated decisively that it *was* a matter of sabotage, after all; it further provided us with a remarkably detailed description of the saboteur. . . ."

Arlene Rolf interrupted. "There had been only one saboteur?"

"Only one who knew what he was doing, yes."

"The rogue telepath?" Dr. Lowry asked.

"Who else?"

"Then if the department has had his description. . . ."

"Why is he still at large?" Ferris Weldon asked, with a suggestion of grim amusement. "Wait till you hear what it

sounded like at the time, Ben! I'll give it to you from memory.

"Arlene has mentioned some of the points. The saboteur, DEDCOM informed us, was, first, a hypnotizing telepath. He could work on his victims from a distance, force them into the decisions and actions he wanted, leave them unaware that their minds had been tampered with, or that anything at all was wrong.

"Next, he was an impersonator, to an extent beyond any ordinary meaning of the word. DEDCOM concluded he must be able to match another human being's appearance so closely that it would deceive his model's most intimate associates. And with the use of these two talents our saboteur had, in ten years, virtually wrecked the colonization program.

"Without any further embellishments, DEDCOM's report of this malevolent superman at loose in our society would have raised official eyebrows everywhere. . . ."

"In particular," Miss Rolf asked, "in the Department of Special Activities?"

"In particular there," Weldon agreed. "The department's experience made the emergence of any human supertalents worth worrying about seem highly improbable. In any event, DEDCOM crowded its luck. It didn't stop

at that point. The problems besetting the colonization program were, it stated, by no means the earliest evidence of a rogue telepath in our midst. It listed a string of apparently somewhat comparable situations stretching back through the past three hundred years, and declared unequivocally that in each case the responsible agent had been the same—our present saboteur.”

WELDON paused, watched their expressions changing. A sardonic smile touched the corners of his mouth.

“All right,” Dr. Lowry said sourly after a moment, “to make the thing even more unlikely, you’re saying now that the rogue is immortal.”

Weldon shook his head. “I didn’t say it . . . and neither, you notice, did DEDCOM. The question of the rogue’s actual life span, whatever it may be, was no part of the matter it had been given to investigate. It said only that in various ways he had been interfering with mankind’s progress for at least three centuries. But added to the rest of it, that statement was quite enough.”

“To accomplish what?”

“What do you think?” Weldon asked. “The report passed eventually through the proper hands, was properly initialed, then filed with DEDCOM’s earlier abortions

and forgotten. Special Activities continued, by its more realistic standard investigative procedures, to attempt to find out what had bogged down the colonization program. As you’re aware, the department didn’t make much headway. And neither has the program.”

“The last is very apparent,” Lowry said, looking puzzled. “But the fact that you’ve failed to solve the problem seems a very poor reason to go back now to the theory of a rogue telepath.”

Weldon blew out a puff of smoke, said thoughtfully, “That wouldn’t have been too logical of us, I agree. But our failure wasn’t the reason for reviving DEDCOM’s theory.”

“Then what was your reason?” Irritation edged Lowry’s voice again.

“The unexpected death, five years ago, of one of the world’s better-known political figures,” Weldon said. “You would recognize the name immediately if I mentioned it. But you will not recognize the circumstances surrounding his death which I am about to relate to you, because the report published at the time was a complete falsehood and omitted everything which might have seemed out of the ordinary. The man actually was the victim of murder. His corpse was found floating in the Atlantic. That it

should have been noticed at all was an unlikely coincidence, but the body was fished out and identified. At that point, the matter acquired some very improbable aspects because it was well known that this man was still alive and in the best of health at his home in New York.

"It could have been a case of mistaken identification, but it wasn't. The corpse was the real thing. While this was being definitely established, the man in New York quietly disappeared . . . and now a number of people began to take a different view of DEDCOM's long-buried report of a hypnotizing telepath who could assume the identity of another person convincingly enough to fool even close friends. It was not conclusive evidence, but it did justify a serious inquiry which was promptly attempted."

"Attempted?" Arlene Rolf asked. "What happened?"

WHAT happened," Weldon said, "was that the rogue declared war on us. A limited war on the human race. A quiet, undercover war for a specific purpose. And that was to choke off any kind of investigation that might endanger him or hamper his activities. The rogue knew he had betrayed himself; and if he hadn't known of it earlier, he learned now about the report DEDCOM had made. Those were

matters he couldn't undo. But he could make it very clear that he wanted to be left undisturbed, and that he had methods to enforce his wishes."

Dr. Lowry blinked. "What could one . . ."

"Ben," Ferris Weldon said, "if you'll look back, you'll recall that a little less than five years ago we had . . . packed into the space of a few months . . . a series of the grimmest public disasters on record. These were not due to natural forces—to hurricanes, earthquakes, floods or the like. No, each and every one of them involved, or might have involved, a human agency. They were not inexplicable. Individually, each could be explained only too well by human incompetence, human lunacy or criminal purpose. But—a giant hotel exploded, a city's water supply was poisoned, a liner . . . yes, you remember."

"Now, notice that the rogue did not strike directly at our investigators. He did that on a later occasion and under different circumstances, but not at the time. It indicated that in spite of his immense natural advantages he did not regard himself as invulnerable. And, of course, he had no need to assume personal risks. By the public nonspace and air systems, he would move anywhere on earth within hours; and wherever he went, any hu-

man being within the range of his mind became a potential tool. He could order death at will and be at a safe distance when the order was executed. Within ten weeks, he had Special Activities on the ropes. The attempts to identify him were called off. And the abnormal series of disasters promptly ended. The rogue had made his point."

Arlene said soberly, "You say he attacked some of your investigators later on. What was that about?"

THAT was a year later," Weldon said. "A kind of stalemate had developed. As you're aware, the few operating telepaths in the government's employment are a daintily handled property. They're never regarded as expendable. It was clear they weren't in the rogue's class, so no immediate attempt was made to use them against him. But meanwhile we'd assembled—almost entirely by inference—a much more detailed picture of this opponent of mankind than DEDCOM had been able to provide. He was a freak in every way. His ability to read other minds and to affect them—an apparent blend of telepathy and irresistible hypnosis—obviously was a much more powerful and definite tool than the unreliable gropings of any ordinary telepath. But there was the curious point that

he appeared to be limited—very sharply limited—simply by distance, which to most of our trained telepaths is a meaningless factor, at least this side of interplanetary space. If one stayed beyond his range, the rogue was personally harmless. And if he could be identified from beyond his range, he also could be—and by that time almost immediately would have been—destroyed by mechanical means, without regard for any last-moment havoc he might cause.

"So the first security island was established, guarded against the rogue's approach by atmospheric blocks and sophisticated somatic barriers. Two government telepaths were brought to it and induced to locate him mentally.

"It turned out to be another mistake. If our unfortunate prodigies gained any information about the rogue, they didn't live long enough to tell us what it was. Both committed suicide within seconds of each other."

"The rogue had compelled them to do it?" Arlene asked.

"Of course."

"And was this followed," Dr. Lowry asked, "by another public disaster?"

"No," Weldon said. "The rogue may have considered that unnecessary. After all, he'd made his point again. Sending the best of

our tame telepaths after him was like setting spaniels on a tiger. Ordinarily, he could reach a telepath's mind only within his own range, like that of any other person. But if they were obliging enough to make contact with him, they would be instantly at his mercy, wherever he might be. We took the hint; the attempt wasn't repeated. Our other telepaths have remained in the seclusion of security islands, and so far the rogue has showed no interest in getting at them there."

Weldon stubbed his cigarette out carefully in the ashtray beside him, added, "You see now, I think, why we feel it is necessary to take extreme precautions in the further handling of your diex projector."

THERE was silence for some seconds. Then Dr. Lowry said, "Yes, that much has become obvious." He paused, pursing his lips doubtfully, his eyes absent. "All right," he went on. "This has been rather disturbing information, Ferris. But let's look at the thing now.

"We've found that diex energy can be employed to augment the effects of the class of processes commonly referred to as telepathic. The projector operates on that theory. By using it, ordinary mortals like Arlene and myself can duplicate some of the

results reportedly achieved by the best-trained telepaths. However, we are restricted in several ways by our personal limitations. We need the location devices to direct the supporting energy to the points of the globe where the experiments are to be carried out. And so far we have not been able to 'read the mind'—to use that very general term—of anyone with whom we are not at least casually acquainted."

Weldon nodded. "I'm aware of that."

"Very well," Lowry said. "The other advantage of the projector over unaided natural telepathy is its dependability. It works as well today as it did yesterday or last week. Until a natural telepath actually has been tested on these instruments, we can't be certain that the diex field will be equally useful to him. But let's assume that it is and that he employs the projector to locate the rogue. It should be very easy for him to do that. But won't that simply—in your phrasing—put him at the rogue's mercy again?"

Weldon hesitated, said, "We think not, Ben. A specialist in these matters could tell you in a good deal more detail about the functional organization in the mind of a natural telepath. But essentially they all retain unconscious safeguards and resistances which limit their tele-

pathic ability but serve to protect them against negative effects. The difference between them and ourselves on that point appears to be mainly one of degree."

Lowry said, "I think I see. The theory is that such protective processes would be correspondingly strengthened by employing the diex field. . . ."

"That's it," Weldon said. "To carry the analogue I was using a little farther, we might again be sending a spaniel against a tiger. But the spaniel—backed up by the projector—would now be approximately tiger size . . . and tiger-strong. We must assume that the rogue would be far more skilled and deadly in an actual mental struggle, but there should be no struggle. Our telepath's business would be simply to locate his man, identify him, and break away again. During the very few seconds required for that, the diex field should permit him to hold off the rogue's assault."

Dr. Lowry shook his head. "You can't be sure of it, Ferris!" he said. "You can't be sure of it at all."

Weldon smiled. "No, we can't. We don't really know what would happen. But neither, you see, does the rogue."

Lowry said hesitantly, "I'm afraid I don't follow you."

"Ben," Weldon said, "we don't

expect your diex projector will ever be put to the use we've been discussing just now. That isn't its purpose."

Lowry looked dumfounded. "Then what is its purpose?"

ARLENE ROLF's face had gone pale. "Doctor Ben," she said, "I believe Colonel Weldon is implying that the rogue already knows about the diex projector and what might be attempted with it."

Weldon nodded. "Of course, he knows about it. How many secrets do you think can be kept from a creature who can tap the minds of anybody he encounters? You can take it for granted that he's maintained information sources in every department of the government since the day we became aware of his existence. He knows we're out to get him. And he isn't stupid enough to allow things here to develop to the point where one of our telepaths is actually placed in front of that projector. He can't be sure of what the outcome would be. After all, it might . . . very easily . . . be fatal to him."

Lowry began, "Then I don't . . ." He checked himself, gave Arlene Rolf a bewildered look. "Are *you* still with this madman, Arlene?"

Her smile was twisted. "I'm afraid so! If I am, I don't like the situation at all. Colonel Wel-

don, have you people planned to use the diex projector as a trap for the rogue?"

"As bait for a trap," Weldon said. "Ben, put yourself in the rogue's place. He regards this entire planet as his property. But now the livestock is aware of him and is restless. On the technological side it is also becoming more clever by the decade—dangerously clever. He can still keep us in our place here, and so far he's succeeded in blocking a major exodus into the solar system where his power would vanish. But can he continue indefinitely? And can he find any enjoyment in being the lord of all Earth when he has to be constantly on guard now against our efforts to get rid of him? He's blocked our first thrusts and showed us that he can make it a very costly business to harass him too seriously. But the situation is as unsatisfactory to him as to us. He needs much more effective methods of control than were required in the past to bring us back to heel."

Lowry said, "And the diex projector . . ."

Weldon nodded. "Of course! The diex projector is the perfect solution to the rogue's problems. The security islands which so far have been our principle form of defense would become meaningless. He could reach any human mind on Earth directly and

immediately. Future plots to overthrow him would stand no chance of success.

"The rogue has shown no scientific ability of his own, and the handful of other men who might be capable at present of constructing a similar instrument have been placed beyond his reach. So he has permitted the development of the projector to continue here, though he could, of course, have put an abrupt stop to it in a number of ways. But you may be sure that he intends to bring the diex projector into his possession before it actually can be used against him."

Arlene said, "And he's assumed to know that the projector is now operational, aside from any faults that might still show up in the tests?"

"Yes," Weldon said.

She went on, "Does the fact that I was allowed to leave the project several times a week—actually whenever I felt like it—have something to do with that?"

WELDON said, "We believe that the rogue has taken advantage rather regularly of that arrangement. After all, there was no more dependable way of informing himself of the exact state of affairs on the project than . . ."

"Than by picking my mind?"

Weldon hesitated, said,

"There's no denying that we have placed you both in danger, Arlene. Under the circumstances, we can offer no apology for that. It was a matter of simple necessity."

"I wasn't expecting an apology, Colonel Weldon." Her face was white. "But I'm wondering what the rogue is supposed to attempt now."

"To get possession of the projector?" Weldon hesitated again. "We don't know that exactly. We believe we have considered every possible approach, and whichever he selects, we're prepared to trap him in the process of carrying it out."

Dr. Lowry said, "But he must suspect that you intend to trap him!"

Weldon nodded. "He does, naturally. But he's under a parallel disadvantage there—he can't be certain what the traps are. You don't realize yet how elaborate our precautionary measures have been." Weldon indicated the small door in the wall beyond Dr. Lowry. "The reason I use only that private conduit to come here is that I haven't stepped off a security island for almost three years! The same has been true of anyone else who had information we had to keep from the rogue . . . including incidentally Mr. Green, whose occasional 'public appearances' during this critical period have been elabo-

ately staged fakes. We communicate only by viewphone; in fact, none of us even knows just where the others are. There is almost no chance that he can do more than guess at the exact nature of our plans."

"And with all that," Lowry said slowly, "you expect he will still go ahead and make a bid for the projector?"

"He will because he must!" Weldon said. "His only alternative would be to destroy this security island with everything on it at the last moment. And that is very unlikely. The rogue's actions show that in spite of his current troubles with us he has a vast contempt for ordinary human beings. Without that feeling, he would never have permitted the diex projector to be completed. So he will come for it—very warily, taking every precaution, but confident of outmaneuvering us at the end."

Arlene asked, "And isn't it possible that he will do just that?"

There was a barely perceptible pause before Weldon replied. "Yes," he said then, "it's possible. It's a small chance—perhaps only a theoretical one. But we're not omniscient, and we may not know quite as much about him as we think. It remains possible."

"Then why take even that risk?" Arlene asked. "Wouldn't it be better to destroy the projec-

tor now—to leave things as they are—rather than offer him a weapon which would reduce us all to helpless chattels again?”

Weldon shook his head. “Arlene, we can’t leave things as they are! Neither can the rogue. You know that really—even though you refuse to admit it to yourself at the moment.”

“I . . . what do you mean?”

THIS year,” Weldon said patiently, “we have the diex projector. What will we have five years from now when diex energy has been more fully explored? When the other fields of knowledge that have been opened in recent years begin to expand? We could, perhaps, slow down those processes. We can’t stop them. And, at any point, other unpredictable weapons may emerge . . . weapons we might use against the rogue, or that he might use against us.

“No, for both sides the time to act is now, unless we’re willing to leave the future to chance. We aren’t; and the rogue isn’t. We’ve challenged him to determine whether he or mankind will control this planet, and he’s accepted the challenge. It amounts to that. And it’s very likely that the outcome will have become apparent not many hours from now.”

Arlene shook her head but said nothing. Dr. Lowry asked,

“Ferris, exactly what is *our* role in this situation supposed to be?”

“For the next few hours,” Weldon said, “you’ll be instructing me in the practical details of operating the projector. I’ve studied your reports very carefully, of course, and I could handle it after a fashion without such help. But that isn’t good enough. Because—as the rogue knows very well—we aren’t bluffing in the least in this. We’re forcing him to take action. If he doesn’t”—Weldon nodded at the polished hardwood box on the table before Dr. Lowry—one of our telepaths presently *will* be placed before that instrument of yours, and the rogue will face the possibility of being flushed into view. And there is no point on the globe at this moment which is more than a few minutes’ flight away from one of our strike groups.

“So he’ll take action . . . at the latest as soon as the order is given to move our telepath to the Cleaver Project. But you two won’t be here when it happens. You’re not needed for that part, and while we’ve been talking, the main project conduit has been shunted from our university exit here to a security island outside the area. You’ll move there directly from the project as soon as you finish checking me out, and you will remain there until

Operation Rogue is concluded.

"And now let's get busy! I think it would be best, Ben, if I assumed Arlene's usual role for a start . . . secondary operator . . . and let you go through the regular pattern of contacts while I look on. What do you say?"

ARLENE ROLF had taken a chair well back from the table where the two men sat before the diex projector. She realized it had been an attempt to dissociate herself—emotionally as well as physically—from what was being done there, and that the attempt hadn't been at all successful. Her usual composure, based on the awareness of being able to adjust herself efficiently to the necessities of any emergency, was simply gone. The story of the rogue had been sprung on them too abruptly at this last moment. Her mind accepted the concept but hadn't really assimilated it yet. Listening to what Weldon had said, wanting to remain judiciously skeptical but finding herself increasingly unable to disbelieve him—that had been like a slow, continuous shock. She wasn't yet over it. Her thoughts wouldn't follow the lines she set them on but veered off almost incoherently every minute or two. For the first time in her adult life she was badly frightened—made stupid with fear—and finding it

something she seemed unable to control at will.

Her gaze shifted back helplessly to the table and to the dull-blue concave viewplate which was the diex projector's central section. Unfolded from its case, the projector was a beautiful machine of spider web angularities lifting from the flat silver slab of its generator to the plate. The blurred shiftings of color and light in the center of the plate were next to meaningless without the diex goggles. Dr. Lowry and Weldon had fitted over their heads; but Arlene was familiar enough with the routine test patterns to follow their progress without listening closely to what was said. . . .

She wanted the testing to stop. She felt it was dangerous. Hadn't Weldon said they still couldn't be sure of the actual extent of the rogue's abilities? And mightn't the projector be luring their minds out now into the enemy's territory, drawing his attention to what was being done in this room? There had been seconds when an uncanny certainty had come to her that she could sense the rogue's presence, that he already was cynically aware of what they were attempting, and only biding his time before he interfered. That might be—almost certainly was—superstitious imagining, but the conviction had been strong.

Strong enough to leave her trembling.

But there was, of course, exactly nothing she could do or say now to keep them from going on. She remained silent.

So far it had been routine. A standard warm-up. They'd touched Vanderlin in Melbourne, Marie Faber in Seattle. The wash of colors in the viewplate was the reflection of individual sensory impressions riding the diex field. There had been no verbalizing or conscious response from the contacted subjects. That would come later. Dr. Lowry's face was turned momentarily sideways to her, the conical grey lenses of the goggles protruding from beneath his forehead like staring insect eyes.

SHE realized he must have said something to Weldon just now which she hadn't heard. Weldon's head was nodding in agreement. Dr. Lowry shifted back to the table, said, "Rotucato, Brazil—an untried location. How the pinpointing of these random samplings is brought about is of course . . ." His voice dropped to an indistinct murmur as he reached out to the projector again.

Arlene roused herself with an effort partly out of her foggy fears. It was almost like trying to awake from a heavy, uncomfortable sleep. But now there was

also some feeling of relief—and angry self-contempt—because obviously while she had been giving in to her emotional reactions, nothing disastrous had in fact occurred! At the table, they'd moved on several steps in the standard testing procedure. She hadn't even been aware of it. She was behaving like a fool!

The sensory color patterns were gone from the viewplate, and now as she looked, the green-patterned white field of the projector's location map appeared there instead. She watched Dr. Lowry's practiced fingers spin the coordinating dials, and layer after layer of the map came surging into view, each a magnified section of the preceding one. There was a faint click. Lowry released the dials, murmured something again, ended more audibly, "... twenty-mile radius." The viewplate had gone blank, but Arlene continued to watch it.

The projector was directed now towards a twenty-mile circle at ground level somewhere in Brazil. None of their established contacts were in that area. Nevertheless, something quite definite was occurring. Dr. Lowry had not expected to learn much more about this particular process until a disciplined telepathic mind was operating through the instrument—and perhaps not too much more then. But in some

manner the diex energy was now probing the area, and presently it would touch a human mind—sometimes a succession of them, sometimes only one. It was always the lightest of contacts. The subjects remained patently unaware of any unusual experience, and the only thing reflected from them was the familiar generalized flux of sensory impressions—

ARLENE ROLF realized she was standing just inside the open records vault of Dr. Lowry's office, with a bundle of files in her arms. On the floor about her was a tumbled disorder of other files, of scattered papers, tapes. She dropped the bundle on the litter, turned back to the door. And only then, with a churning rush of hot terror, came the thought, *What am I doing here? What happened?*

She saw Dr. Lowry appear in the vault door with another pile of papers. He tossed them in carelessly, turned back into the office without glancing in her direction. Arlene found herself walking out after him, her legs carrying her along in dreamlike independence of her will. Lowry was now upending the contents of a drawer to the top of his desk. She tried to scream his name. There was no sound. She saw his face for an instant. He looked thoughtful, absorbed in

what he was doing, nothing else. . . .

Then she was walking through the living room, carrying something—the next instant, it seemed, she'd reentered Lowry's office. Nightmarishly, it continued. Blank lapses of awareness followed moments in which her mind swayed in wild terrors while her body moved about, machine-like and competent, piling material from workshop and file cabinets helter-skelter into the records vault. It might have been going on for only three or four minutes or for an hour; her memory was enclosed in splinters of time and reality. But there were moments, too, when her thoughts became lucid and memory returned . . . Colonel Weldon's broad back as he disappeared through the narrow door in the living room wall into the private conduit entry, the strap of the diex projector case in his right hand; then the door closing behind him. Before that had been an instant when something blazed red in the projector's viewplate on the table, and she'd wondered why neither of the two men sitting before it made any comment—

Then suddenly, in one of the lucid moments, there was time for the stunned thought to form: *So the rogue caught us all!* Weldon's self-confidence and courage, Dr. Lowry's dedicated skill,

her own reluctance to be committed to this matter . . . nothing had made the slightest difference. In his own time, the rogue had come quietly through every defense and seized their minds. Weldon was on his way to him now, carrying the diex projector.

And she and Dr. Lowry? They'd been ordered by the rogue to dispose of every scrap of information dealing with the projector's construction, of course! They were doing it. And after they had finished—then what?

Arlene thought she knew when she saw Dr. Lowry close the vault, and unlock and plunge the destruct button beside the door. Everything in there would be annihilated now in ravening white fire. But the two minds which knew the secrets of the projector—

SHE must have made a violent effort to escape, almost overriding the rogue's compulsions. For she found herself in the living room, not ten feet from the door that opened into the outer halls where help might still have been found. But it was as far as she could go; she was already turning away from the door, starting back across the room with the quick, graceful automaton stride over which she had no control. And terror surged up in her again.

As she approached the far wall, she saw Dr. Lowry come out of the passage from the office, smiling absently, blinking at the floor through his glasses. He turned without looking up and walked behind her towards the closed narrow door before Colonel Weldon's nonspace conduit entry.

So it wasn't to be death, Arlene thought, but personal slavery. The rogue still had use for them. They were to follow where Weldon had gone. . . .

Her hand tugged at the door. It wouldn't open.

She wrenched at it violently, savagely, formless panic pounding through her. After a moment, Dr. Lowry began to mutter uneasily, then reached out to help her.

The room seemed suddenly to explode; and for an instant Arlene Rolf felt her mind disintegrating in raging torrents of white light.

SHE had been looking drowsily for some moments at the lanky, red-headed man who stood, faced away, half across the room before any sort of conscious understanding returned. Then, immediately, everything was there. She went stiff with shock.

Dr. Lowry's living room . . . she in this chair and Dr. Lowry stretched out on the couch. He'd



seemed asleep. And standing above him, looking down at him, the familiar raw-boned, big figure of Frank Harding. Dr. Frank Harding who had walked up to the Cleaver Spaceport entry with her today, told her he'd be flying back to the coast.

Frank Harding, the . . .

Arlene slipped quietly out of the chair, moved across the room behind Harding's back, watching him. When he began to turn, she darted off towards the open hall entry.

She heard him make a startled exclamation, come pounding after her. He caught her at the entry, swung her around, holding her wrists. He stared down at her from under the bristling red brows. "What the devil did you think you were doing?"

"You . . . !" Arlene gasped frantically. "You—" What checked her was first the surprise, then the dawning understanding in his face. She stammered, almost dizzy with relief, "I . . . I thought you must be . . ."

Harding shook his head, relaxed his grip on her wrists.

"But I'm not, of course," he said quietly.

"No . . . you're not! You wouldn't have had to . . . chase me if you were, would you?" Her eyes went round in renewed dismay. "But I don't . . . he has the diex projector now!"

Harding shook his head again and took her arm. "No, he doesn't! Now just try to relax a bit, Arlene. We did trap him, you know. It cost quite a few more lives at the end, but we did. So let's go over and sit down. I brought some whisky along . . . figured you two should be able to use a little after everything you've been through."

Arlene sat on the edge of a chair, watching him pour out a glass. A reaction had set in; she felt very weak and shaky now, and she seemed unable to comprehend entirely that the rogue had been caught.

She said, "So you were in on this operation too?"

He glanced around. "Uh-huh . . . Dome at the bottom of an ocean basin wasn't at all a bad headquarters under the circumstances. What put you and Dr. Ben to sleep was light-shock." He handed her the glass.

"Light-shock?" Arlene repeated.

"Something new," Harding said. "Developed—in another security island project—for the specific purpose of resolving hypnotic compulsions, including the very heavy type implanted by the rogue. He doesn't seem to have been aware of that project, or else he regarded it as one of our less important efforts which he could afford to ignore for the present. Anyway, light-shock

does do the job, and very cleanly, though it knocks the patient out for a while in the process. That side effect isn't too desirable, but so far it's been impossible to avoid."

"I see," Arlene said. She took a cautious swallow of the whisky and set the glass down as her eyes began to water.

FRANK HARDING leaned back against the table and folded his arms. He scowled thoughtfully down at her.

"We managed to get two persons who were suspected of being the rogue's unconscious stooges to the island," he said, "and tried light-shock out on them. It worked and didn't harm them, so we decided to use it here. Lowry will wake up in another hour at the latest and be none the worse. Of course, neither of you will remember what happened while the rogue had you under control, but . . ."

"You're quite wrong about that," Arlene told him. "I don't remember all of it, but I'm still very much aware of perhaps half of what happened—though I'm not sure I wouldn't prefer to forget it. It was like an extremely unpleasant nightmare."

Harding looked surprised. "That's very curious! The other cases reported complete amnesia. Perhaps you . . ."

"You've been under a heavy

strain yourself, haven't you, Frank?" she asked.

He hesitated. "I? What makes you think so?"

"You're being rather gabby. It isn't like you."

Harding grunted. "I suppose you're right. This thing's been tense enough. *He* may have enjoyed it—except naturally at the very end. Playing cat and mouse with the whole human race! Well, the mice turned out to be a little too much for him, after all. But of course nothing was certain until that last moment."

"Because none of you could be sure of anyone else?"

"That was it mainly. This was one operation where actually nobody *could* be in charge completely or completely trusted. There were overlaps for everything, and no one knew what all of them were. When Weldon came here today, he turned on a pocket transmitter so that everything that went on while he was being instructed in the use of the diex projector would be monitored outside.

"Outside was also a globe-scanner which duplicated the activities of the one attached to the projector. We could tell at any moment to which section of Earth the projector's diex field had been directed. That was one of the overlapping precautions. It sounded like a standard check run. There was a little more con-

versation between Lowry and Weldon than was normal when you were the assistant operator, but that could be expected. There were pauses while the projector was shut down and preparations for the next experiment were made. Normal again. Then, during one of the pauses, we got the signal that someone had just entered Weldon's private non-space conduit over there from this end. That was *not* normal, and the conduit was immediately sealed off at both exits. One more overlapping precaution, you see . . . and that just happened to be the one that paid off!"

Arlene frowned. "But what did . . ."

"Well," Harding said, "there were still a number of questions to be answered, of course. They had to be answered fast and correctly or the game could be lost. Nobody expected the rogue to show up in person at the Cleaver Project. The whole security island could have been destroyed in an instant; we knew he was aware of that. But he'd obviously made a move of some kind—and we had to assume that the diex projector was now suspended in the conduit.

BUT who, or what, was in there with it? The project guards had been withdrawn. There'd been only the three of you on the island. The rogue could have had

access to all three at some time or other; and his compulsions—until we found a way to treat them—were good for a lifetime. Any of you might have carried that projector into the conduit to deliver it to him. Or all three might be involved, acting together. If that was the case, the conduit would have to be reopened because the game had to continue. It was the rogue we wanted, not his tools. . . .

"And there *was* the other possibility. You and Dr. Ben are among the rather few human beings on Earth we could be sure were not the rogue, not one of his impersonations. If he'd been capable of building a diex projector, he wouldn't have had to steal one. Colonel Weldon had been with Special Activities for a long time. But he could be an impersonation. In other words, the rogue."

Arlene felt her face go white. "He was!" she said.

"Eh? How do you know?"

"I didn't realize it, but . . . no, go ahead. I'd rather tell you later."

"What didn't you realize?" Harding persisted.

Arlene said, "I experienced some of his feelings . . . after he was inside the conduit. He knew he'd been trapped!" Her hands were shaking. "I thought they were my own . . . that I . . ." Her voice began to falter.

"Let it go," Harding said, watching her. "It can't have been pleasant."

She shook her head. "I assure you it wasn't!"

"So he could reach you from nonspace!" Harding said. "That was something we didn't know. We suspected we still didn't have the whole picture about the rogue. But he didn't know everything either. He thought his escape route from the project and away through the conduit system was clear. It was a very bold move. If he'd reached any point on Earth where we weren't waiting to destroy him from a distance, he would have needed only a minute or two with the projector to win all the way. Well, that failed. And a very short time later, we knew we had the rogue in the conduit."

"How did you find that out?"

Harding said, "The duplicate global scanner I told you about. After all, the rogue *could* have been Weldon. Aside from you two, he could have been almost anyone involved in the operation. He might have been masquerading as one of our own telepaths! Every location point the diex field turned to during that 'test run' came under instant investigation. We were looking for occurrences which might indicate the rogue had been handling the diex projector.

"The first reports didn't start

to come in until after the Weldon imitation had taken the projector into the conduit. But then, in a few minutes, we had plenty! They showed the rogue had tested the projector, knew he could handle it, knew he'd reestablished himself as king of the world—and this time for good! And then he walked off into the conduit with his wonderful stolen weapon. . . ."

Arlene said, "He was trying to get Dr. Ben and me to open the project exit for him again. We couldn't, of course. I never imagined anyone could experience the terror he felt."

"There was some reason for it," Harding said. "Physical action is impossible in nonspace, so he couldn't use the projector. He was helpless while he was in the conduit. And he knew we couldn't compromise when we let him out.

"We switched the conduit exit to a point eight hundred feet above the surface of Cleaver Interplanetary Spaceport—the project he's kept us from completing for the past twenty-odd years—and opened it there. We still weren't completely certain, you know, that the rogue mightn't turn out to be a genuine superman who would whisk himself away and out of our reach just before he hit the marblite paving.

"But he wasn't. . . ." THE END

Dear NAN GLANDERS

By BETA McGAVIN

Illustrated by SUMMERS

A time-travelling friend of ours recently returned from the future with the following clipping from the Galactic Times. It seems that even in the world of tomorrow, there will always be an advice column, and that folks will still be worried about such humdrum things as interplanetary etiquette, and cosmic sex.

Dear Miss Glanders:

From his childhood my Johnny has been an avid collector of bugs, snakes, birds nests and other things. Our little Centurian home is crammed full with extra-terrestrial life forms as well. I put up with it as long as I could. Yesterday he brought home a native Centurian female. As you know it is a quasi-intelligent mammalian form with the breasts and hips of a woman, fish scales and tail and a horned head. Johnny insists he's going to marry her. What shall I do?

Distressed Mother

Dear Distressed:

I suggest you contact your local fish and game department.

* * *

Dear Nan Glanders:

I am a hostess noted for my parties. Tomorrow we will have

the Sirian ambassador and 2 of his 3 wives coming for a dinner party. How many forks and knives will be necessary for a guest with 3 sets of tentacles? Should I seat one of his wives on either side of him, or what?

Worried

Dear Worried:

Seating arrangements are unnecessary as Sirians prefer to hang attached by the dorsal suction disk from a ceiling fixture and suspend their elongated trunks to the table below. Just have a dish of adobe type clay handy on the table and let them help themselves.

* * *

Dear Miss Glanders:

My mother-in-law is a noted TK with a high range of ESP and Prescience. Today she asked me if I was pregnant. Do you

think she could have peeked at my mind?

P.S. I am 5 months along but still get into my everyday clothes with the help of a safety pin.

Concerned

Dear Safety-pinned:

It's high time You peeked—and buy a maternity smock while you're at it.

Confidential to "What will it be?" I've consulted an obstetrician for you. He said the baby has to be human. A simple matter of differential chromosomes. So relax.

* * *

Dear Nan:

I was the victim of a billion to one transplat accident. When I came out of the transmitter after commuting to work one day, 2 extra copies of my original body rather than only the usual one were reassembled at the receiving end. In other words I became triplets with each person having the same memories and all. Nobody was around so I decided not to report it to the transplat company. Until now I was an ordinary guy who faithfully hands over his paycheck to the old girl every payday. Don't get me wrong, now. I'm a happily married man but I do like having a little spending money for myself and a night out with the boys every now and then. So the three of us made a deal. While one of

us went to work, another one would be home and the third out on the town. We took turns, share and share



Nan Glanders

alike. Then our wife caught two of us together and guessed the rest. She is suing for divorce and charging bigamy. We still love her though. How can we get her to listen to reason? Since the case is in the newspapers anyway, I might as well sign my name. Married for better or worse.

Jimmy Jones

Jimmy Jones

Jimmy Jones

Dear Joneses:

Either reintegrate, or draw straws and two of you skidoo.

* * *

Dear Nan Glanders:

I am a debutante on tour through the United Planets. I have never been so humiliated in my life. Yesterday I was presented to a Rigellian and he spat on my new shoes. I would have slapped his face if I could have decided which one to hit.

Steaming

Dear Steaming:

Simmer down. Spitting on the feet is the traditional Rigellian gesture of welcome. You should have replied by stepping on his tail. Next time read your tourists' guide book better.

By
KEITH
LAUMER

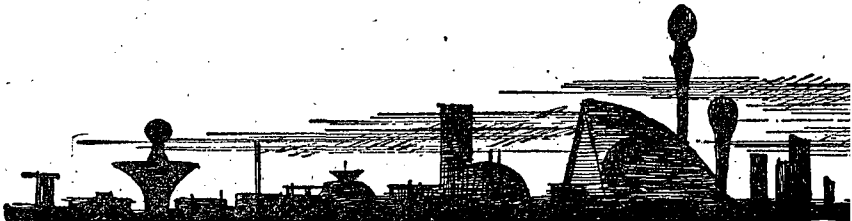


(Second of three parts)

a TRACE of MEMORY

SYNOPSIS OF PART ONE

M*Y name's Legion. In the past few years I'd had a lot of luck—all bad. Now I was in a town nobody ever heard of, broke and stranded, thinking over ways and means of acquiring the price of a ticket south. The local cop nailed me as I was looking over*



the back door of a cigar store, after dark. I didn't have any good answers ready for the questions he asked me; I made the mistake of starting to lie. Sure, I had a job here in town. Who did I work for? I remembered an ad in the classified section of the paper I'd been looking at. Somebody named Foster had a job open . . .

"Foster," I said. "I work for Mr. Foster."

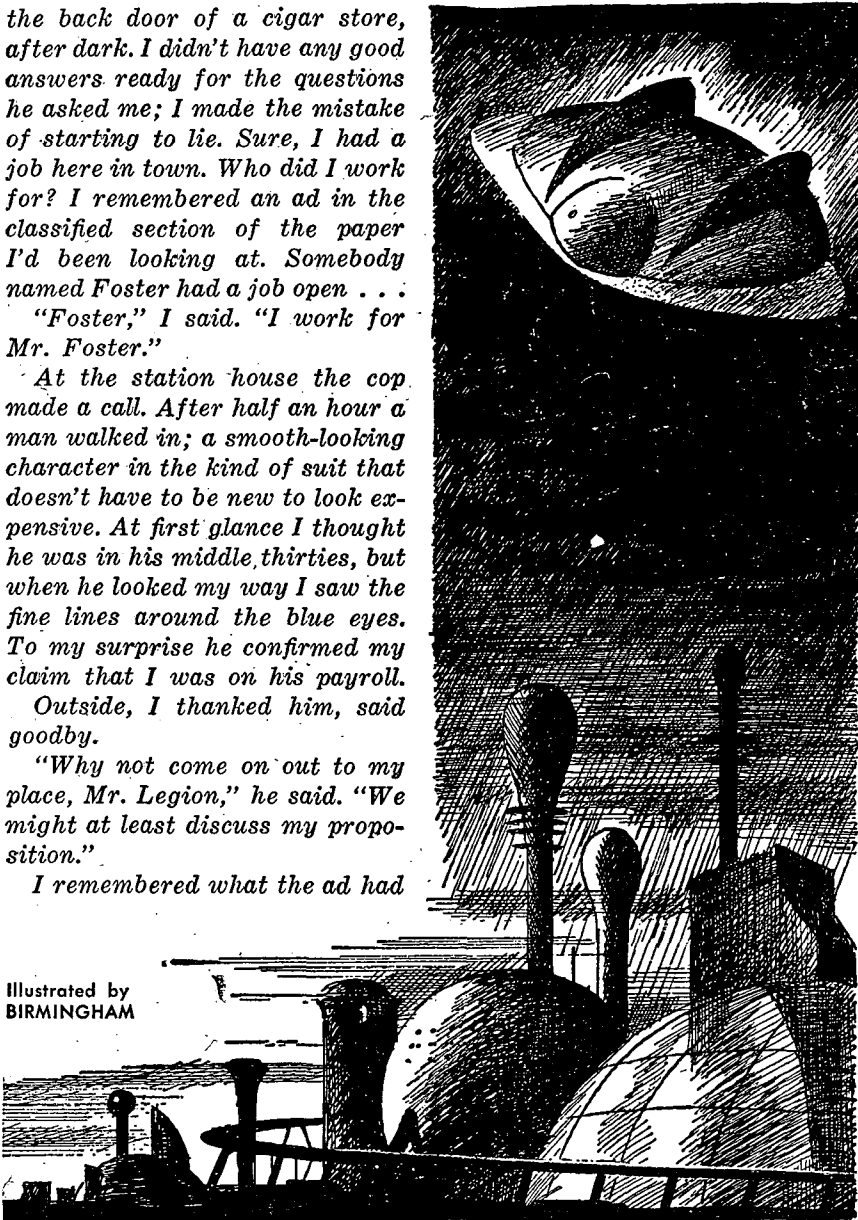
At the station house the cop made a call. After half an hour a man walked in; a smooth-looking character in the kind of suit that doesn't have to be new to look expensive. At first glance I thought he was in his middle thirties, but when he looked my way I saw the fine lines around the blue eyes. To my surprise he confirmed my claim that I was on his payroll.

Outside, I thanked him, said goodby.

"Why not come on out to my place, Mr. Legion," he said. "We might at least discuss my proposition."

I remembered what the ad had

Illustrated by
BIRMINGHAM



said: "Soldier of Fortune desires companion-at-arms to share unusual adventure . . ."

If I went along, I'd at least get a meal and maybe even a bed for the night.

At his house—a fancy layout ten miles from town—Foster fed me; then he started to talk. He was, he said, a victim of amnesia.

He got a small book from his desk. I riffled through, read a few words here and there:

"January 19, 1710. Having come nigh to calamity with the near loss of the key, I will henceforth keep this journal in the English tongue . . ."

"Most of the book is in code," Foster said. "I think it holds the key to my past." He went on to tell me more: how he was being followed, not by mysterious men in funny overcoats, but by lights—globes that chased him, but which he had discovered could be destroyed by a strong light. By now I was looking around for the nearest exit.

"They're closing in again," Foster finished. "I've had indications that soon I'll have to move on. I want you to join me, help me learn the secret of the journal."

I told him I'd think it over, and we turned in. An hour later I eased out of bed, borrowed some clothes of Foster's, and started out the back way. Foster intercepted me.

"Listen carefully," he said. "We are in grave danger. The house is under attack. We must leave." I looked back to see luminous globes clustered at the windows of the house.

WE drove all night. Just before dawn Foster pulled the car off the road, started to say something—and passed out cold. I got him to a small town hotel, arranged for a doctor to come by in the morning, and went to sleep.

Next morning I sneaked downstairs with ideas of moving on—alone. A paper boy shoved the latest news at me. On the front page I saw:

POLICE RAID HIDEOUT

The article was a doozie. The cops had discovered Foster was missing, and they figured he was dead, done away with by a northern hoodlum—me—who had visited him the night before. I was wanted for murder.

Back in the room Foster was sitting up. "What are you going to do about this!" I yelled. "Get on the phone and straighten it out!"

"Forgive me for asking," Foster said pleasantly. "But—who are you?"

I got the implications in a hurry. Foster's amnesia had come back—leaving me with a lot of explaining to do. But at least I could produce the body—still

breathing. I put up the shade, turned to Foster—and got shock number two. The man I was talking to couldn't have been a day over twenty years old.

I had no choice now. The cops would never believe this boy was Foster. I had to get clear—and take Foster with me—and try to get his memory back.

HOLED up in a dump in Miami, I had my first break. There was a scratch on the cover of the book. Under a microscope it turned out to be a key to a code. I used it to unravel a part of the book; but there was still a section in foreign characters I couldn't read.

The part I deciphered described a place called the Pit of the Hunters, where the writer had fought before fleeing. There were details about a chalk face and some other landmarks. With some maps and a dime-store globe we narrowed it down to Western Europe, then the British Isles, then a plain.

Salisbury Plain. And a tiny dot in its center . . .

Stonehenge.

It took us a month to fake up papers, wrangle work-a-way passage, and look over the ground. The place was just as the encyclopedia had described it:

“—a great stone structure, pre-eminent among megalithic monuments of the ancient world.

Within a circular ditch 300 feet in diameter, stones up to 22 feet in height are arranged in concentric circles. Calculations indicate a date of approximately 1600 B.C.”

But we found nothing that was any help. It was a wild goose chase—and our sparse funds were running out. Then, at a pub called the Ancient Sinner, Foster noticed a sign showing a skeleton, holding up a hand and smiling. And on the hand there was a ring—the twin to the one Foster wore.

We pumped the tavern-keep for information. The bones, he said, had been found near Stonehenge, centuries before. The pub was built on the site of their burial.

That night he led us to it. When we reached the spot, near one of the great stones, a crack opened in a hollow, and globes of light like those I had seen at Foster's house swarmed out. They attacked; we fought them with flashlights. Our guide ran.

When I had managed to drive off the last of the globes we investigated the hole they had come from. It was a shaft driven deep in the earth. At the other end of it we found a chamber—full of electronic gear. There was a radar screen, showing a plane at high altitude. I got careless and pushed a button. The screen showed something drop free.

from the aircraft. It looked like I had dropped a bomb by remote control.

BACK at the surface we watched as a great dark shape came to earth, centered on the stone rings of the monument. A slit of yellow light appeared in its side, widened to a square. A ladder extended. It was a small space-ship—and at our disposal.

We heard the rumble of approaching bombers. If they used atomics, ducking behind a rock wouldn't help. There was only one chance. We sprinted for the ship. Inside, Foster worked a lever—the only control visible. The ship rose and, under automatic control, rendezvoused with a giant black vessel orbiting at thirty thousand miles. Inside it, we climbed out into a vaulted cavern, shadowed, mysterious, rich with a thousand colors. An empty-eyed skull stared from the shadows at the base of a fluted column.

We explored. The ship was a treasure house—deserted except for skeletons. Foster was intrigued by what looked like ebony chop sticks; placed at the temple, they created hallucinations—training devices.

We found the library where the briefing rods were stored. One, U-shaped and marked with red was a generalized background briefing. Perhaps it would

tell us enough to make some sense of what we'd discovered. Foster decided to try it. He took a seat in a low couch, clamped the plastic shape over his temples, and slumped back, unconscious.

I told myself this was normal; that Foster would come out of it soon, loaded with knowledge that would make us both rich. I wandered into the next room—and found three more skeletons, slumped on the floor among strange machines. A dull silvery cylinder projected from the side of a chair-like apparatus. I pulled it out; it resembled the black briefing rods, except that it was thicker. I wondered what kind of information it contained. I dropped it in my pocket and went back to wait beside Foster.

It was an hour before he stirred. He reached up, pulled off the plastic head-piece, dropped it on the floor.

"Are you okay?" I asked.

Foster looked at me, his eyes travelling up to my uncombed hair and down to my scuffed shoes. His eyes narrowed in a faint frown. Then he said something—in a language that seemed to be all Z's and Q's.

"Enough surprises, Foster," I said hoarsely. "Talk American."

He stared into my eyes, then glanced around the room.

"This is a ship's library," he said.

I heaved a sigh of relief. Foster was watching my face. "What was it all about?" I said. "What have you found out?"

"I know you," said Foster slowly. "Your name is Legion."

I nodded. I could feel myself getting tense again. "Sure, you know me." I put a hand on his shoulder. "You remember: we were—"

He shook my hand off. "That is not the custom in Vallon," he said coldly.

"Vallon?" I echoed. "What kind of routine is this, Foster?"

"Where are the others?"

"There's a couple of 'others' in the next room," I snapped. "But they've lost a lot of weight. Outside of them there's only me—"

Foster looked at me as if I wasn't there. "I remember Vallon," he said. He put a hand to his head. "But I remember too a barbaric world, brutal and primitive. You were there. We travelled in a crude rail-car, and then in a barge that wallowed in the sea. There were narrow, ugly rooms, evil odors, harsh noises . . . and The Hunters! We fled from them, Legion, you and I. And I remember a landing-ring . . ." He paused. "Strange, it had lost its cap-stones and fallen into ruin."

"Us natives call it Stonehenge."

"The Hunters burst out of the earth. We fought them. But why

should the Hunters seek me?"

"I was hoping you'd tell me," I said. "Do you know where this ship came from? And why?"

"This is a ship of the Two Worlds," he replied. "But I know nothing of how it came to be here."

"How about all that stuff in the journal? Maybe now you—"

"The journal!" Foster broke in. "Where is it!"

"In your coat pocket, I guess."

Foster felt through his jacket awkwardly, brought out the journal. He opened it and looked at the part written in the curious alien characters that nobody had been able to decipher.

But he was reading it.

FOR hours I had waited while Foster read. At last he leaned back in his chair and sighed.

"My name," he said, "was Qulqlan. And this," he laid his hand upon the book, "is my story. This is one part of the past I was seeking. And I remember none of it . . ."

"Tell me what the journal says."

Foster picked it up. "It seems that I awoke once before, in a small room aboard this vessel. I was lying on a memo-couch, by which circumstance I knew that I had suffered a Change—"

"You mean you'd lost your memory?"

"And regained it—on the

couch. My memory-trace had been re-impressed on my mind. I awoke knowing my identity, but not how I came to be aboard this vessel. The journal says that my last memory was of a building beside the Shallow Sea."

"Where's that?"

"On a far world—called Vallon."

"Yeah? And what next?"

"I looked around me and saw four men lying on the floor, slashed and bloody. One was alive. I gave him what emergency treatment I could, then searched the ship. I found three more men, dead; none living. Then the Hunters attacked, swarming to me. They would have sucked the life from me—and I had no shield of light. I fled to the life boat, carrying the wounded man. I descended to the planet below: your Earth. The man died there. He had been my friend, a man named Ammerln. I buried him in a shallow depression in the earth and marked the place with a stone."

"The Ancient Sinner," I said.

"Yes . . . I suppose it was his bones the lay brother found."

"And we found out last night that the depression was the result of dirt sifting down into the ventilator shaft. But I guess you didn't know anything about the underground installation, way back then. Doesn't the journal say anything . . . ?"

"No, there is no mention made of it here."

"How about the Hunters? How did they get to Earth?"

"They are insubstantial creatures," said Foster, "yet they can endure the vacuum of space. I can only surmise that they followed the life boat down."

"They were tailing you?"

"Yes; but I have no idea why they pursued me. They're harmless creatures in the natural state, used to seek out the rare fugitive from justice on Vallon. They can be attuned to the individual; thereafter, they follow him and mark him out for capture."

"Say, what were you: a big-time racketeer on Vallon?"

THE journal is frustratingly silent as to my Vallonian career," said Foster. "But this whole matter of the unexplained inter-galactic voyage and the evidence of violence aboard the ship make me wonder whether I was being exiled for crimes done in the Two Worlds."

"So they sicked the Hunters on you?" I said. "But why did they hang around at Stonehenge all this time?"

"There was a trickle of power feeding the screens," said Foster. "They need a source of electrical energy to live; until a hundred years ago it was the only one on the planet."

"How did they get down into the shaft without opening it up?"

"Given time, they pass easily through porous substances. But, of course, last night, when I came on them after their long fast, they simply burst through in their haste."

"Okay. What happened next?—after you buried the man."

"The journal tells that I was set upon by natives, men who wore the hides of animals. One of their number entered the ship. He must have moved the drive lever. It lifted, leaving me marooned."

"So those were his bones we found in the boat," I mused: "the ones with the bear's-tooth necklace. I wonder why he didn't come into the ship."

"Undoubtedly he did. But remember the skeleton we found just inside the landing port? That must have been a fairly fresh and rather gory corpse at the time the savage stepped aboard. It probably seemed to him all too clear an indication of what lay in store for himself if he ventured further. In his terror he must have retreated to the boat to wait, and there starved to death."

"He was stranded in your world, and you were stranded in his."

"Yes," said Foster. "And then, it seems, I lived among the brute-

men and came to be their king. I waited there by the landing ring through many years in the hope of rescue. Because I did not age as the natives did, I was worshipped as a god. I would have built a signalling device, but there were no pure metals, nothing I could use. I tried to teach them, but it was a work of centuries."

"But how could one go on living—for hundreds of years? Are you people supermen that live forever?"

"Not forever. But the natural span of a human life is very great. Among your people, there is a wasting disease from which you all die young."

"That's no disease," I said. "You just naturally get old and die."

"The human mind is a magnificent instrument," Foster said; "not meant to wither quickly."

"Why didn't you catch this 'disease'?"

"All Vallonians are innoculated against it."

FOSTER turned back to the Journal. "I ruled many peoples under many names," he said. "I travelled in many lands, seeking for skilled metal-workers, glass-blowers, wise men. But always I returned to the landing-ring."

"It must have been tough," I said, "exiled on a strange world,

living out your life in a wilderness, century after century. . . .”

“My life was not without interest,” Foster said. “I watched my savage people put aside their animal hides and learn the ways of civilization. I built a great city, and I tried—foolishly—to teach their noble caste the code of chivalry of the two Worlds. But although they sat at a round table like the great Ringboard at Okk-Hamiloth, they never really understood. And then they grew too wise, and wondered at their king who never aged. I left them, and tried again to build a long-signaller. The Hunters sensed it, and swarmed to me. I drove them off with fires, and then I grew curious, and followed them back to their nest—”

“I know,” I said. “‘And it was a place you knew of old; no hive but a Pit built by men.’”

“They overwhelmed me; I barely escaped with my life. Starvation had made the Hunters vicious. They would have drained my body of its life-energy.”

“And if you’d known the transmitter was there—but you didn’t. So you put an ocean between you and them.”

“They found me even there. Each time I destroyed many of them, and fled. But always a few lived to breed and seek me out again.”

“Didn’t your signaller work?”

“No. It was a hopeless attempt. Only a highly developed technology could supply the raw materials. I could only teach what I knew, encourage the development of the sciences, and wait. And then I began to forget.”

“Why?”

“A mind grows weary,” Foster said. “It is the price of longevity. It must renew itself. Shock and privation hasten the change. I had held it off for many centuries. Now I felt it coming on me.

“At home, on Vallon, a man would record his memory at such a time, store it electronically in a recording device, and, after the Change, use the memory-trace to restore, in his renewed body, his old recollections in toto. But, marooned as I was, my memories, once lost, were gone forever.

“I did what I could: I prepared a safe place, and wrote messages that I would find when I awoke—”

“When you woke up in the hotel,” I said, “you were young again, overnight. How could it happen?”

“When the mind renews itself, erasing the scars of the years, the body, too, regenerates.”

WHEN I first met you,” I said, “you told me about waking up back in 1918, with no memory.”

“Yours is a harsh world, Le-

gion. I must have forgotten, many times. Somewhere, sometime, I lost the vital link, forgot my quest; when the Hunters came again, I fled, not understanding."

There was a silence, then Foster spoke in a faraway voice.

"What came to pass aboard this ship all those centuries ago?" he said. "Why was I here? And what killed the others? Someday, somehow I must learn the truth of this matter."

"What I can't figure out is why somebody didn't come after this ship. It was right here in orbit."

"Consider the immensity of space, Legion. This is one tiny world, among the stars."

"But there was a station here, fitted out for handling your ships. That sounds like it was a regular port of call. And the books with the pictures: they prove your people have been here off and on for thousands of years. Why would they stop coming?"

"There are such beacons on a thousand worlds," said Foster. "Think of it as a buoy marking a reef, a trailblaze in the wilderness. Ages could pass before a wanderer chanced this way again. The fact that the ventilator shaft at Stonehenge was choked with the debris of centuries when I first landed there shows how seldom this world was visited."

I thought about it. Trying to

piece together Foster's past would be a slow process. I had an idea:

"Say, you said you were in the memory machine. You woke up there—and you'd just had your memory restored. Why not do the same thing again, now? That is, if your brain can take another pounding this soon."

"Yes," he said. He stood up abruptly. "There's just a chance. Come on!"

I FOLLOWED him out of the library into the room with the bones.

Foster walked across to the fancy couch, leaned down, then shook his head. "No," he said. "Of course it wouldn't be here . . ."

"What?"

"My memory-trace: the one that was used to restore my memory—that other time."

Suddenly I recalled the cylinder I had pocketed hours before. With a surprising flutter at my heart I held it up. "This it?"

Foster glanced at it briefly. "No, that's an empty—like those you see filed over there." He pointed to the rack of pewter-colored cylinders on the opposite wall. "They would be used for emergency recordings. Regular multi-life memory-traces would be key-coded with a pattern of colored lines."

"It figures," I said. "That would have been too easy."

"It doesn't matter, really. When I return to Vallon, I'll recover my past. There are vaults in Okk-Hamiloth where every citizen's trace is stored."

"I guess you'll be eager to get back there," I said. Have you been able to figure out how long you were marooned down on Earth?"

"Since I descended from this ship, Legion," he said, "three thousand years have passed."

"I'm going to miss you, Foster," I said. "You know, I was kind of getting used to being an apprentice nut."

"Come with me to Vallon, Legion," he said.

"Thanks anyway, buddy," I said. "I'd like to see those other worlds of yours but in the end I'd regret it. I'd just sit around on Vallon pining for home: beat-up people, and all."

THEN what can I do for you, Legion, to reward your loyalty and express my gratitude?"

"Let me take the lifeboat, and stock it with a few goodies from the library, and some of those marbles from the storeroom, and a couple of the smaller mechanical gadgets. I think I know how to merchandise them in a way that'll leave the economy on an even keel—and incidentally set me up for life! As you said, I'm a materialist."

"Take whatever you desire."

"One thing I'll have to do when I get back," I said, "is open the tunnel at Stonehenge enough to sneak a thermite bomb down it—if they haven't already found the beacon station."

"As I judge the temper of the local people," Foster said, "the secret is safe for at least three generations."

"I'll bring the boat down in a blind spot where radar won't pick it up," I said. "Our timing was good; in another few years, it wouldn't have been possible."

"And this ship would soon have been discovered."

I looked at the great smooth sphere hanging, haloed, against utter black. The Pacific Ocean threw back a brilliant image of the sun.

I turned to Foster. "We're in a ten-hour orbit," I said. "We'd better get moving. I want to put the boat down in southern South America. I know a place there where I can unload without answering too many questions."

"You have several hours before the most favorable launch time," Foster said. "There's no hurry."

"Maybe not, but I've got a lot to do—and I'm eager to start."

CHAPTER VIII

I SAT on the terrace watching the sun go down into the sea and thinking about Foster, some-

where out there beyond the purple palaces on the far horizon, in the ship that had waited for him for three thousand years, heading home at last. It was strange to reflect that for him, travelling near the speed of light, only a few weeks had passed, while three years went by for me—three fast years that I had put to good use.

The toughest part had been the first few months, after I put the life boat down in a cañon in the desert country south of a little town called Itzenca, in Peru. I hiked to town, carrying a pack with a few carefully selected items to start my new career. It took me two weeks to work, lie, barter, and plead my way to the seaport town of Callao and another week to line up passage home as a deck hand on a banana scow. I disappeared over the side at Tampa, and made it to Miami without attracting attention. As far as I could tell, the cops had already lost interest in me.

The items I had brought with me from the life boat were a pocketful of little grey dominoes, that were actually movie film, and a small projector to go with them. I didn't offer them for sale, direct. I made arrangements with an old acquaintance in the business of making pictures with low costume budgets for private showings; I set up the apparatus and projected my films, and he

copied them in 35 mm. I told him that I'd smuggled them in from East Germany.

I had twelve pictures altogether; with a little judicious cutting and a dubbed-in commentary, they made up into fast-moving twenty-minute short subjects. He got in touch with a friend in the distribution end in New York, and after a little cagy fencing over contract terms, we agreed on a deal that paid me a hundred thousand for the twelve, with an option on another dozen at the same price.

Within a week after the pictures hit the neighborhood theatres around Bayonne, New Jersey, in a cautious try-out, I had offers up to half a million for my next consignment, no questions asked. I left my pal Mickey to handle the details, on a percentage basis, and headed back for Itzenca.

THE life-boat was just as I'd left it; it would have been all right for another fifty years, as far as the danger of anybody stumbling over it was concerned. I explained to the crew I brought out with me that it was a fake rocket ship, a prop I was using for a film I was making. They went to work setting up a system of camouflage nets (part of the plot, I told them) and unloading my cargo.

A year after my homecoming,

I had my island—a square mile of perfect climate, fifteen miles off the Peruvian coast—and a house that was tailored to my every whim. The uppermost floor—almost a tower—was a strong-room, and it was there that I had stored my stock in trade. I had sold the best of the hundred or so films I had picked out before leaving Foster, but there were plenty of other items. The projector itself was the big prize. The self-contained power unit converted nuclear energy to light with 99 percent efficiency. It scanned the ‘films’, one molecular layer at a time, and projected a continuous picture. The color and sound were absolutely life-like.

The principles involved in the projector were new, and—in theory, at least—way over the heads of our local physicists. But the practical application was nothing much. I figured that, with the right contacts in scientific circles to help me, introduce the system, I had a billion-dollar industry up my sleeve. I had already fed a few little gimmicks into the market; a tough paper, suitable for shirts and underwear; a chemical that bleached teeth white as the driven snow; an all-color pigment for artists. With the knowledge I had absorbed from all the briefing rods I had studied, I had the techniques of a hundred new industries at my

fingertips—and I hadn’t exhausted the possibilities yet.

I spent most of a year roaming the world, discovering all the things that a free hand with a dollar bill could do for a man. Then followed a year of fixing up the island.

NOW, after the first big thrill of economic freedom had worn off, it was beginning to get me: boredom, the disease of the idle rich, that I had sworn would never touch me. But thinking about wealth and having it on your hands are two different things, and I was beginning to remember almost with nostalgia, the tough old times when every day was an adventure, full of cops and missed meals and a thousand unappeased desires.

I finished up my expensive cigar and leaned forward to drop it in a big silver ashtray, when something caught my eye out across the red-painted water. I sat squinting at it, then went inside and came out with a pair of 12 x binoculars. I focussed them and studied the dark speck that stood out clearly now against the gaudy sky. It was a heavy looking power boat, heading dead toward my island.

I watched it come closer, and ease alongside the hundred foot concrete jetty I had built below the sea-wall. The engines died, and the boat sat, in a sudden si-

lence. Two heavy deck guns were mounted on the foredeck, and there were four torpedoes slung in launching cradles. I saw ranks of helmeted men drawn up on deck. They shuffled off onto the pier, formed up into two squads. I counted; forty-eight men, and a couple of officers. There was the faint sound of orders being barked, and the column stepped off, moving along the paved road that led up to the house. They halted. The two officers, wearing class A's, and a tubby civilian with a brief case approached the steps leading up to my perch.

THE leading officer, a brigadier general, no less, looked up at me.

"I am General Smale," he said. "This is Colonel Sanchez of the Peruvian Army—" he indicated the other military type—"and Mr. Pruffy of the American Embassy at Lima."

I nodded.

"We would like to talk with you about an official matter, Mr. Legion. It's of great importance, involving the security of your country."

"OK, General," I said. "Come on up."

They filed onto the terrace, hesitated, then shook hands, and sat down in the empty chairs. Pruffy held his briefcase in his lap.

"I'm here," the general said,

"to ask you a few questions, Mr. Legion. Mr. Pruffy represents the Department of State in the matter, and Colonel Sanchez—"

"Don't tell me," I said. "He represents the Peruvian government, which is why I don't ask you what the hell an armed American force is doing wandering around on Peruvian soil. What's it all about, Smale?"

"I'll come directly to the point," he said. "For some time, the investigative and security agencies of the US government have been building a file on what for lack of a better name has been called 'The Martians'. A little over three years ago an unidentified flying object appeared on a number of radar screens, descending from extreme altitude. It came to earth at . . ." he hesitated.

"Don't tell me you came all the way out here to tell me you can't tell me," I said.

"—a site in England," Smale said. "American aircraft were dispatched to investigate the object. Before they could make identification, it rose again, accelerated at tremendous speed, and was lost at an altitude of several hundred miles."

"I thought we had better radar than that," I said. "The satellite program—"

"No such specialized equipment was available," Smale said. "An intensive investigation

turned up the fact that two strangers—possibly Americans—had visited the site only a few hours before the—ah—visitation.”

I nodded. I was thinking about the close call I'd had when I went back to see about putting a bomb down the shaft to obliterate the beacon station. There were plainclothes men all over the place, like old maids at a movie star's funeral. It was just as well; they never found it. The rocket blasts had collapsed the tunnel, and apparently the whole underground installation was made of non-metallic substances that didn't show up on detecting equipment. I had an idea metal was passé where Foster came from.

SOME months later,” Smale went on, “a series of rather curious short films went on exhibition in the United States. They showed scenes representing conditions on other planets, as well as ancient and prehistoric incidents here on Earth. They were prefaced with explanations that they merely represented the opinions of science as to what was likely to be found on distant worlds. They attracted wide interest, and with few exceptions, scientists praised their verisimilitude.”

“I admire a clever fake,” I said. “With a topical subject like space travel—”

“One item which was commented on as a surprising inaccuracy, in view of the technical excellence of the other films,” Smale said, “was the view of our planet from space, showing the Earth against a backdrop of stars. A study of the constellations by astronomers quickly indicated a ‘date’ of approximately 7000 B.C. for the scene. Oddly, the north polar cap was shown centered on Hudson's Bay. No South Polar cap was in evidence. The continent of Antarctica appeared to be at a latitude of some 30°, entirely free of ice.”

I looked at him and waited.

“How, studies made since that time indicate that nine thousand years ago, the North Pole was indeed centered on Hudson's Bay,” Smale said. “And Antarctica was in fact ice-free.”

“That idea's been around a long time,” I said. “There was a theory—”

“Then there was the matter of the views of Mars,” the general said. “The aerial shots of the ‘canals’ were regarded as very cleverly done.” He turned to Pruffy, who opened his briefcase and handed a couple of photos across.

“This is a scene taken from the film,” Smale said. It was an 8x10 color shot, showing a row of mounds drifted with pinkish dust, against a blue-black horizon.

Smale placed another photo beside the first. "This one," he said, "was taken by automatic cameras in the successful Mars probe of last year."

I looked. The second shot was fuzzy, and the color was shifted badly toward the blue, but there was no mistaking the scene. The mounds were drifted a little deeper, and the angle was different, but they were the same mounds.

"In the meantime," Smale boared on relentlessly, "a number of novel products appeared on the market. Chemists and physicists alike were dumfounded at the theoretical base implied by the techniques involved. One of the products—a type of pigment—embodied a completely new concept in crystallography."

"Progress," I said. "Why, when I was a boy—"

"It was an extremely tortuous trail we followed," Smale said. "But we found that all these curious observations making up the 'Martians' file had only one factor in common—you, Mr. Lé-gion."

CHAPTER IX

IT was a few minutes after sunrise, and Smale and I were back on the terrace toying with the remains of ham steaks and honeydew.

"Beer for breakfast," I said. "A little unusual, maybe, but it

goes swell with ham and eggs. That's one advantage of being in jail in your own house—the food's good."

"I can understand your feelings," Smale said. "It was my hope that you'd see fit to co-operate voluntarily."

"Take your army and sail off into the sunrise, General," I said. "Then maybe I'll be in a position to do something voluntary."

"Your patriotism alone—"

"My patriotism keeps telling me that where I come from a citizen has certain legal rights," I said.

"This is a matter that transcends legal technicalities," Smale said. "I'll tell you quite frankly, the presence of the task force here only received *ex post facto* approval by the Peruvian government. They were faced with the *fait accompli*. I mention this only to indicate just how strongly the government feels in this matter."

"Seeing you hit the beach with a platoon of infantry was enough of a hint for me," I said. "You're lucky I didn't wipe you out with my disintegrator rays."

Smale choked on a bit of melon.

"Just kidding," I said. "But I haven't given you any trouble. Why the reinforcements?"

Smale stared at me. "What reinforcements?"

I pointed with a fork. He turned, gazed out to sea. A con-

ning tower was breaking the surface, leaving a white wake behind. It rose higher, water streaming off the deck. A hatch popped open, and men poured out, lining up. Smale got to his feet, his napkin falling to the floor.

"Sargeant!" he yelled. I sat, open-mouthed, as Smale jumped to the stair, went down it three steps at a time. I heard him bellying, the shouts of men and the clatter of rifles being unstacked, feet pounding. The Marines were forming up on the lawn.

Smale bounded back up the stairs. "You're my prime responsibility, Legion," he barked. "I want you in the cellar for maximum security."

"What's this all about?" I asked. "Interservice rivalry? You afraid the sailors are going to steal the glory?"

"That's a nuclear-powered sub," Smale barked. "Gagarin class; it belongs to the Soviet Navy."

I STOOD there with my mouth open trying hard to think fast. I hadn't been too startled when the Marines showed up; I had gone over the legal aspects of my situation months before, with a platoon of high-priced legal talent; I knew that sooner or later somebody would come around to hit me for tax evasion,

draft dodging, or overtime parking; but I was in the clear. The government might resent my knowing a lot of things it didn't, but no one could ever prove I'd swiped them from Uncle Sam. In the end, they'd have to let me go—and my account in a Swiss bank would last me, even if they managed to suppress any new developments from my fabulous lab. In a way, I was glad the show-down had come.

But I'd forgotten about the Russians. Naturally, they'd be interested, and their spies were at least as good as the intrepid agents of the US Secret Service. I should have realized that sooner or later, they'd pay a call—and the legal niceties wouldn't slow them down. They'd slap me into a brain laundry, and sweat every last secret out of me as casually as I'd squeeze a lemon.

The sub was fully surfaced now, and I was looking down the barrels of half a dozen five-inch rifles, any one of which could blast Smale's navy out of the water with one salvo. There were a couple of hundred men, I estimated, putting landing boats over the side and spilling into them. Down on the lawn, the sergeant was snapping orders, and the men were double-timing off to positions that must have been spotted in advance. It looked like the Russians weren't entirely unexpected. This was a

game the big boys were playing, and I was just a pawn, caught in the middle. My rose picture of me confounding the bureaucrats was fading fast. My island was about to become a battlefield, and whichever way it turned out, I'd be the loser. I had one slim possibility; to get lost in the shuffle.

"Sorry, General," I said and slammed a hard right to his stomach and a left to the jaw. He dropped. I jumped over him, plunged through the french doors, and took the spiral glass stairway four at a time, whirled, and slammed the strong-room door behind me. The armored walls would stand anything short of a direct hit with a good sized artillery shell, and the boys down below were unlikely to use any heavy stuff for fear of damaging the goods they'd been sent out to collect. I was safe for a little while.

NOW I had to do some fast, accurate thinking. I couldn't carry much with me—when and if I made it off the island. A few briefing rods, maybe; what was left of the movies.

I rummaged through odds and ends, stuffing small items into my pockets. I came across a dull silvery cylinder, three inches long, striped in black and gold—a memory trace. It reminded me of something . . .

That was an idea. I still had

the U-shaped plastic headpiece that Foster had used to acquire a background knowledge of his old home-world. I had tried it once—for a moment. It had given me a headache in two seconds flat, just pressed against my temple. It had been lying here ever since. But maybe now was the time to try it again. Half the items I had here in my strong-room were mysteries, like the silver cylinder in my hand, but I knew exactly what the plastic headband could give me. It contained all anyone needed to know about Valon and the Two Worlds, and all the marvels they possessed.

I glanced out the armor-glass window. Smale's Marines were trotting across the lawn; the Russians were fanning out along the water's edge. It looked like business all right. It would take them a while to get warmed up—and more time still to decide to blast me out of my fort. It had taken an hour or so for Foster to soak up the briefing; maybe I wouldn't be much longer at it.

I tossed the cylinder aside, tried a couple of drawers, found the inconspicuous strip of plastic that encompassed a whole civilization. I carried it across to a chair, settled myself, then hesitated. This thing had been designed for an alien brain. Suppose it burnt out my wiring, left me here gibbering, for Smale or the Russkis to work over?

But the alternative was to leave my island virtually empty-handed.

No, I wouldn't go back to poverty without a struggle. What I could carry in my head would give me independence—even immunity from the greed of nations. I could barter my knowledge for my freedom.

There were plenty of things wrong with the picture, but it was the best I could do on short notice. Gingerly I fitted the U-shaped band to my head. There was a feeling of pressure, then a sensation like warm water rising about me. Panic tried to rise, faded. A voice seemed to reassure me. I was among friends, I was safe, all was well . . .

CHAPTER X

I LAY in the dark, the memory of towers and trumpets and fountains of fire in my mind. I put up my hand, felt a coarse garment. Had I but dreamed . . . ? I stirred. Light blazed in a widening band above my face. Through narrowed eyes I saw a room, a mean chamber, dusty, littered with ill-assorted rubbish. In a wall there was a window. I went to it, stared out upon a green sward, a path that curved downward to a white strand. It was a strange scene, and yet—

A wave of vertigo swept over me, faded. I tried to remember.

I reached up, felt something clamped over my head. I pulled it off and it fell to the floor with a faint clatter: a broad-spectrum briefing device, of the type used to indoctrinate unidentified citizens who had undergone a Change unprepared . . .

Suddenly, like water pouring down a drain, the picture in my mind faded, left me standing in my old familiar junk room, with a humming in my head and a throb in my temples. I had been about to try the briefing gimmick, and had wondered if it would work. It had—with a vengeance. For a minute there I had stumbled around the room like a stranger, yearning for dear old Vallon. I could remember the feeling—but it was gone now. I was just me, in trouble as usual.

A rattle of gunfire outside brought me to the window in a jump. It was the same view as a few moments before, but it made more sense now. There was the still-smoking wreckage of the PT boat, sunk in ten feet of water a few yards from the end of the jetty. Somebody must have tried to make a run for it. The Russian sub was nowhere in sight; probably it had landed the men and backed out of danger from any unexpected quarter. Two or three corpses lay in view, down by the water's edge. From where I stood I couldn't say if they were good guys or bad.

There were more shots, coming from somewhere off to the left. It looked like the boys were fighting it out old style: hand to hand, with small arms. It figured; after all, what they wanted was me and all my clever ideas, intact, not a smoking ruin.

I don't know whether it was my romantic streak or my cynical one that had made me drive the architect nuts putting secret passages in the walls of my chateau and tunnels under the lawn, but I was glad now I had them. There was a narrow door in the west wall of the strong-room that gave onto a tight spiral stair. From there, I could take my choice: the boathouse, the edge of the woods behind the house, or the beach a hundred yards north of the jetty. All I had to do was—

THE house trembled a split second ahead of a terrific blast that slammed me to the floor. I felt blood start from my nose. Head ringing, I scrambled to my feet, groped through the dust to my escape hatch. Somebody outside was getting impatient.

My fingers were on the sensitive pressure areas that worked the concealed door. I took a last glance around the room, where the dust was just settling from the last blast. My eyes fell on the cylinder, lying where I had tossed it. In one jump I was

across the room and had grabbed it up. I had found it aboard the life boat, concealed among the bones of the man with the bear-tooth necklace. Now I, with my Vallonian memories banked in my mind, could appreciate just how precious an object it was. It was Foster's memory. It would be only a copy, undoubtedly; still, I couldn't leave it behind.

A blast heavier than the last one rocked the house. Snorting and coughing from the dust, I got back to the emergency door, went through it, and started down.

The fight was going on, as near as I could judge, to the south of the house and behind it. Probably the woods were full of skirmishers, taking advantage of the cover. The best bet was the boathouse, direct. With a little luck I'd find my boat intact.

THE tunnel was dark but that didn't bother me. It ran dead straight to the boathouse. I came to the wooden slat door and stood for a moment, listening; everything was quiet. I eased it open and stepped onto the ramp inside the building. In the gloom, polished mahogany and chrome-work threw back muted highlights. I circled, slipped the mooring rope, and was about to step into the cockpit when I heard the bolt of a rifle snick home. I whirled, threw myself

flat. The deafening bam of a 30 calibre fired at close quarters laid a pattern of fine ripples on the black water. I rolled, hit with a splash that drowned a second shot, and dove deep. Three strokes took me under the door, out into the green gloom of open water. I hugged the yellowish sand of the bottom, angled off to the right, and kept going.

I had to get out of my jacket, and somehow I managed it, almost without losing a stroke. And there went all the goodies I'd stashed away in the pockets, down to the bottom of the drink. I still had the memory-trace in my slacks. I managed thirty strokes before having to surface. I got half a gulp of fresh air before the shot slapped spray into my face and echoed off across the water. I sank like a stone, kicked off, and made another twenty-five yards before I had to come up. The rifleman was faster this time. The bullet creased my shoulder like a hot iron, and I was under water again. My kick-work was weak now; the strength was draining from my arms fast. I had to have air. My chest was on fire and there was a whirling blackness all around me. I felt consciousness fading . . .

As from a distance I observed the clumsy efforts of the swimmer, watched the flounderings of the poor, untrained creature . . .

It was apparent that an override of the autonomic system was required. With dispatch I activated cortical area omicron, re-routed the blood supply, drew an emergency oxygen source from stored fats, diverting the necessary energy to break the molecular bonds.

Now, with the body drawing on internal sources, ample for six hundred seconds at maximum demand, I stimulated areas upsilon and mu. I channeled full survival-level energy to the muscle complexes involved, increased power output to full skeletal tolerance, eliminated waste motion.

The body drove through the water with the fluid grace of a sea-denizen . . .

I FLOATED on my back, breathing in great surges of cool air and blinking at the crimson sky. I had been under water, a few yards from shore, drowning. Then there was an awareness, like a voice, telling me what to do. From out of the mass of Valonian knowledge I had acquired, I had drawn what I needed. And now I was here, half a mile from the beach, winded but intact. I felt beat and hungry, but I had to keep my mind on the problem of getting to the mainland. It was a fifteen-mile swim, but if the boys on shore could keep each other occupied, I ought to be able to make it. The full moon

would make steering easy. And the first thing I would do when I got out of this would be to order the biggest, rarest steak in South America.

CHAPTER XI

I SAT at the kitchen table in Margareta's Lima apartment and gnawed the last few shreds off the stripped T-bone, while she poured me another cup of coffee.

"Now tell me about it," she said. "You say they burned your house, but why? And how did you get here?"

"They got so interested in the fight, they lost their heads," I said. "That's the only explanation I can think of. I figured they'd go to some pains to avoid damaging me. I guessed wrong."

"But your own people . . ."

"Maybe they were right: they couldn't afford to let the Russkis get me."

"But how did you get covered with mud? And the blood stains on your back?"

"I had a nice long swim: five hours' worth. Then another hour getting through a mangrove swamp. Lucky I had a moon. Then a three-hour hike. . . ."

"You'd better get some sleep," said Margareta. "What do you want me to do?"

"Get me some clothes," I said. "A grey suit, white shirt, black

tie and shoes. And go to my bank and draw some money, say five thousand. Oh yeah, see if there's anything in the papers. If you see anybody hanging around the lobby when you come back, don't come up; give me a call and I'll meet you."

She stood up. "This is really awful," she said. "Can't your embassy—"

"Didn't I mention it? A Mr. Pruffy, of the embassy, came along to hold Smale's hand . . . not to mention a Colonel Sanchez. I wouldn't be surprised if the local cops weren't in the act by now. . . ."

"Where will you go?"

"I'll get to the airport and play it by ear. I don't think they've alerted everybody. It was a hush-hush deal, until it went sour; now they're still picking up the pieces."

"The bank won't be open for hours yet," said Margareta. "Go to sleep and don't worry. I'll take care of everything."

I KNEW I wasn't alone as soon as I opened my eyes. I hadn't heard anything, but I could feel someone in the room. I sat up slowly, looked around.

He was sitting in the embroidered chair by the window: an ordinary-looking fellow in a tan tropical suit, with an unlighted cigarette in his mouth and no particular expression on his face.

"Go ahead, light up," I said. "Don't mind me."

"Thanks," he said, in a thin voice. He took a lighter from an inner pocket, flipped it, held it to the cigarette.

I stood up. There was a blur of motion from my visitor, and the lighter was gone and a short-nosed revolver was in its place.

"You've got the wrong scoop, mister," I said. "I don't bite."

"I'd rather you wouldn't move suddenly, Mr. Legion."

"Which side are you working for?" I asked. "And can I put my shoes on."

He rested the pistol on his knee. "Get completely dressed, Mr. Legion."

"Sorry," I said. "No can do. No clothes."

He frowned slightly. "My jacket will be a little small for you," he said. "But I think you can manage."

"How come you didn't figure I was dead?" I asked.

"We checked the house," he said. "No body."

"Why, you incompetent asses. You were supposed to think I drowned."

"That possibility was considered. But we made the routine checks anyway."

"Nice of you to let me sleep it out. How long have you been here?"

"Only a few minutes," he said. He glanced at his watch. "We'll

have to be going in another fifteen."

"What do you want with me?" I said. "You blew up everything you were interested in."

"The Department wants to ask you a few questions."

I looked at the pistol. "I wonder if you'd really shoot me," I mused.

"I'll try to make the position clear," he said. "Just to avoid any unfortunate misunderstanding. My instructions are to bring you in, alive—if possible. If it appears that you may evade arrest . . . or fall into the wrong hands, I'll be forced to use the gun."

I PULLED my shoes on, thinking it over. My best chance to make a break was now, while there was only one watch dog. But I had a feeling he was telling the truth about shooting me. I had already seen the boys in action at the house.

He got up. "Let's step into the living room, Mr. Legion," he said. I moved past him through the door. In the living room the clock on the mantle said eleven. I'd been asleep for five or six hours. Margareta ought to be getting back any minute. . . .

"Put this on," he said. I took the light jacket and wedged myself into it.

The telephone rang.

I looked at my watchdog. He

shook his head. We stood and listened to it ring. After a while it stopped.

"We'd better be going now," he said. "Walk ahead of me, please. We'll take the elevator to the basement and leave by the service entrance—"

He stopped talking, eyes on the door. There was the rattle of a key. The gun came up.

"Hold it," I snapped. "It's the girl who owns the apartment." I moved to face him, my back to the door.

"That was foolish of you, Legion," he said. "Don't move again."

I watched the door in the big mirror on the opposite wall. The knob turned, the door swung in . . . and a thin brown man in white shirt and white pants slipped into the room. As he pushed the door back he transferred a small automatic to his left hand. My keeper threw a lever on the revolver that was aimed at my belt buckle.

"Stand absolutely still, Legion," he said. "If you have a chance, that's it." He moved aside slightly, looked past me to the newcomer. I watched in the mirror as the man in white behind me swiveled to keep both of us covered.

"This is a fail-safe weapon," said my first owner to the new man. "I think you know about them. We leaked the information

to you. I'm holding the trigger back; if my hand relaxes, it fires, so I'd be a little careful about shooting, if I were you."

The thin man swallowed. He didn't say anything. He was having to make some tough decisions. His instructions would be the same as my other friend's: to bring me in alive, if possible.

"Who does this bird represent?" I asked my man.

"He's a Soviet agent."

I looked in the mirror at the man again. "Nuts," I said. "He looks like a waiter in a chile joint. He probably came up to take our order."

"You talk too much," said my keeper between his teeth. He held the gun on me steadily. I watched his trigger finger to see if it looked like relaxing.

"I'd say it's a stalemate," I said. "Let's take it once more from the top. Both of you go—"

"Shut up, Legion." My man licked his lips, glanced at my face. "I'm sorry. It looks as though—"

"You don't want to shoot me," I blurted out, loudly. In the mirror I had seen the door, which was standing ajar, ease open an inch, two inches. "You'll spoil this nice coat. . . ." I kept on talking: "And anyway it would be a big mistake, because everybody knows Russian agents are stubby men with wide cheekbones and tight hats—"

SILENTLY Margareta slipped into the room, took two quick steps, and slammed a heavy handbag down on the slicked-back pompadour that went with the Adam's apple. Then man in white stumbled and fired a round into the rug. The automatic dropped from his hand, and my pal in tan stepped to him and hit him hard on the back of the head with his pistol. He whirled toward me, hissed "Play it smart" just loud enough for me to hear, then turned to Margareta. He slipped the gun in his pocket, but I knew he could get it out again in a hurry.

"Very nicely done, Miss," he said. "I'll have this person removed from your apartment. Mr. Legion and I were just going."

Margareta looked at me. I didn't want to see her get hurt—or involved.

"It's okay, honey," I said. "This is Mr. Jones . . . of our Embassy. We're old friends." I stepped past her, headed for the door. My hand was on the knob when I heard a solid thunk behind me. I whirled in time to clip the FBI on the jaw as he fell forward. Margareta looked at me, wide-eyed.

"That handbag packs a wallop," I said. "Nice work, Maggie." I knelt, pulled off the fellow's belt, and cinched his hands behind his back with it. Margareta got the idea, did the same

for the other man, who was beginning to groan now.

"Who are these men?" she asked.

"I'll tell you all about it later. Right now, I have to get to some people I know, get this story on the wires, out in the open. State'll be a little shy about gunning me down or locking me up without trial, if I give the show enough publicity." I reached in my pocket, handed her the black-&-gold-marked cylinder. Mail this to—Joe Dugan—at Itzenca, general delivery."

"All right," Margareta said. "And I have your things." She stepped into the hall, came back with a shopping bag and a suit carton. She took a wad of bills from her handbag and handed it to me.

I went to her and put my arms around her. "Listen, honey: as soon as I leave go to the bank and draw fifty grand. Get out of the country. They haven't got anything on you except that you beaned a couple of intruders in your apartment, but it'll be better if you disappear. Leave an address care of Poste Restante, Basle, Switzerland. I'll get in touch when I can."

Twenty minutes later I was pushing through the big glass doors onto the sidewalk, clean-shaven, dressed to the teeth, with five grand on one hip and a .32

on the other. I'd had a good meal and a fair sleep, and against me the secret services of two or three countries didn't have a chance.

I got as far as the corner before they nailed me.

CHAPTER XII

YOU have a great deal to lose," General Smale was saying, and nothing to gain by your stubbornness. You're a young man, vigorous and, I'm sure, intelligent. You have a fortune of some million and a quarter dollars, which I assure you you'll be permitted to keep. As against that prospect, so long as you refuse to co-operate, we must regard you as no better than a traitorous criminal—and deal with you accordingly."

"What have you been feeding me?" I said. "My mouth tastes like somebody's old gym shoes and my arm's purple to the elbow. Don't you know it's illegal to administer drugs without a license?"

"The nation's security is at stake," snapped Smale.

"The funny thing is, it must not have worked, or you wouldn't be begging me to tell all. I thought that scopolamine or whatever you're using was the real goods."

"We've gotten nothing but gibberish," Smale said, "most of it

in an incomprehensible language. Who the devil are you, Legion? Where do you come from?"

"You know everything," I said. "You told me so yourself. I'm a guy named Legion, from Mount Sterling, Illinois, population: one thousand eight hundred and ninety-two."

Smale had gone white. "I'm in a position to inflict agonies on you, you insolent rotter," he grated. "I've refrained from doing so. I'm a soldier; I know my duty. I'm prepared to give my life; if need be, my honor, to obtain for my government the information you're withholding."

"Turn me loose; then ask me in a nice way. As far as I know, I haven't got anything of military significance to tell you, but if I were treated as a free citizen I might be inclined to let you be the judge of that."

"Tell us now; then you'll go free."

"Sure," I said. "I invented a combination rocket ship and time machine. I travelled around the solar system and made a few short trips back into history. In my spare time I invented other gadgets. I'm planning to take out patents, so naturally I don't intend to spill any secrets. Can I go now?"

Smale got to his feet. "Until we can safely move you, you'll remain in this room. You're on the sixty-third floor of the Yor-

dano Building. The windows are of unbreakable glass, in case you contemplate a particularly untidy suicide. Your person has been stripped of all potentially dangerous items. The door is of heavy construction and securely locked. The furniture has been removed so you can't dismantle it for use as a weapon. It's rather a drab room to spend your future in, but until you decide to cooperate this will be your world."

I DIDN'T say anything. I sat on the floor and watched him leave. I caught a glimpse of two uniformed men outside the door. No doubt they'd take turns looking through the peephole. I'd have solitude without privacy.

I stretched out on the floor, which was padded with a nice thick rug, presumably so that I wouldn't beat my brains out against it just to spite them. I was way behind on my sleep: being interrogated while unconscious wasn't a very restful procedure. I wasn't too worried. In spite of what Smale said, they couldn't keep me here forever. Maybe Margareta had gotten clear and told the story to some newsmen; this kind of thing couldn't stay hidden forever. Or could it?

I thought about what Smale had said about my talking gibberish under the narcotics. That was an odd one. . . .

Quite suddenly I got it. By means of the drugs they must have tapped a level where the Vallonian background briefing was stored: they'd been firing questions at a set of memories that didn't speak English. I grinned, then laughed out loud. Luck was still in the saddle with me.

The glass was in double panels, set in aluminum frames and sealed with a plastic strip. The space between the two panels of glass was evacuated of air, creating an insulating barrier against the heat of the sun. I ran a finger over the aluminum. It was dural: good tough stuff. If I had something to pry with, I might possibly lever the metal away from the glass far enough to take a crack at the edge, the weak point of armor-glass . . . if I had something to hit it with.

Smale had done a good job of stripping the room—and me. I had my shirt and pants and shoes, but no tie or belt. I still had my wallet—empty, a pack of cigarettes with two wilted weeds in it, and a box of matches. Smale had missed a bet: I might set fire to my hair and burn to the ground. I might also stuff a sock down my throat and strangle, or hang myself with a shoe lace—but I wasn't going to.

I looked at the window some more. The door was too tough to

tackle, and the heavies outside were probably hoping for an excuse to work me over. They wouldn't expect me to go after the glass; after all, I was still sixty-three stories up. What would I do if I did make it to the window sill? But we could worry about that later, after I had smelled the fresh air.

My forefinger found an irregularity in the smooth metal: a short groove. I looked closer, saw a screw head set flush with the aluminum surface. Maybe if the frame was bolted together—

No such luck; the screw I had found was the only one. What was it for? Maybe if I removed it I'd find out. But I'd wait until dark to try it. Smale hadn't left a light fixture in the room. After sundown I'd be able to work unobserved.

A COUPLE of hours went by and no one came to disturb my solitude, not even to feed me. I had a short scrap of metal I'd worked loose from my wallet. It was mild steel, flimsy stuff, only about an inch long, but I was hoping the screw might not be set too tight. Aluminum threads strip pretty easily, so it probably wasn't cinched up too hard.

There was no point in theorizing. It was dark now; I'd give it a try. I went to the window, fitted the edge of metal into the slotted screw-head, and twisted.

It turned, just like that. I backed it off ten turns, twenty; it was a thick bolt with fine threads. It came free and air whooshed into the hole. The screw apparently sealed the panel after the air was evacuated.

I thought it over. If I could fill the space between the panels with water and let it freeze . . . : quite a trick in the tropics. I might as well plan to fill it with gin and set it on fire.

I was going in circles. Every idea I got started with "if". I needed something I could manage with the materials at hand: cloth, a box of matches, a few bits of paper.

I got out a cigarette, lit up, and while the match was burning examined the hole from which I'd removed the plug. It was about three sixteenths of an inch in diameter and an inch deep, and there was a hole near the bottom communicating with the air space between the glass panels. It was an old-fashioned method of manufacture but it seemed to have worked all right: the air was pumped out and the hole sealed with the screw. It had at any rate the advantage of being easy to service if the panel leaked. Now with some way of pumping air in, I could blow out the panels. . . .

There was no pump on the premises but I did have some chemicals: the match heads.

They were old style too, like a lot of things in Peru: the strike-once-and-throw-away kind.

I sat on the floor and started to work, chipping the heads off the matchsticks, collecting the dry, purplish material on a scrap of paper. Thirty-eight matches gave me a respectable sample. I packed it together, rolled it in the paper, and crimped the ends. Then I tucked the makeshift fire-cracker into the hole the screw had come from.

Using the metal scrap I scraped at the threads of the screw, blurring them. Then I started it in the hole, half a dozen turns, until it came up against the match heads.

The shoes Margareta had bought me had built-up leather heels: hell on the feet, but just the thing to pound with.

I TOOK the shoe by the toe and hefted it: the flexible sole gave it a good action, like a well-made sap. There were still a couple of "if's" in the equation, but a healthy crack on the screw ought to drive it against the packed match-heads hard enough to detonate them, and the expanding gasses from the explosion ought to exert enough pressure against the glass panels to break them. I'd know in a second.

I flattened myself against the wall, brought the shoe up, and laid it on the screw-head.

There was a deafening boom, a blast of hot air, and a chemical stink, then a gust of cool night wind—and I was on the sill, my back to the street six hundred feet below, my fingers groping for a hold on the ledge above the window. I found a grip, pulled up, reached higher, got my feet on the muntin strip, paused to rest for three seconds, reached again. . . .

I pulled my feet above the window level and heard shouts in the room below:

"—fool killed himself!"

"Get a light in here!"

I clung, breathing deep, and murmured thanks to the architect who had stressed a strong horizontal element in his facade and arranged the strip windows in bays set twelve inches from the face of the structure. Now, if the boys below would keep their eyes on the street underneath long enough for me to get to the roof—

I looked up, to get an idea how far I'd have to go—and gripped the ledge convulsively as the whole building leaned out, tilting me back. . . .

Cold sweat ran into my eyes. I squeezed the stone until my knuckles creaked, and held on. I laid my cheek against the rough plaster, listened to my heart thump. Adrenalin and high hopes had gotten me this far . . . and now it had all drained out and

left me, a frail ground-loving animal, flattened against the cruel face of a tower like a fly on a ceiling, with nothing between me and the unyielding concrete below but the feeble grip of fingers and toes. I started to yell for help, and the words stuck in my dry throat. I breathed in shallow gasps, feeling my muscles tightening, until I hung, rigid as a board, afraid even to roll my eyeballs for fear of dislodging myself. I closed my eyes, felt my hands going numb, and tried again to yell: only a thin croak.

A minute earlier I had had only one worry: that they'd look up and see me. Now my worst fear was that they wouldn't.

This was the end. I'd been close before, but not like this. My fingers could take the strain for maybe another minute, maybe even two; then I'd let go, and the wind would whip at me for a few timeless seconds, before I hit.

DOWN inside of me a small defiance flickered, found a foothold, burned brighter. I would die . . . but Hell, that would solve a lot of problems. And if I had to die, at least I could die trying.

My mind moved in to take over from my body. It was the body that was wasting my last strength on a precarious illusion of safety, numbing my senses,

paralyzing me. It was a tyranny I wouldn't accept. I needed a cool head and a steady hand and an unimpaired sense of balance; and if the imbecile boy wouldn't cooperate the mind would damn well force it. First: loosen the grip—Yes! if it killed me: bend those fingers!

I was standing a little looser now, my hands resting flat, my legs taking the load. I had a good wide ledge to stand on: nearly a foot, and in a minute I was going to reach up and get a new hold and lift one foot at a time . . . and if I slipped, at least I'd have done it my way.

I let go, and the building leaned out, and to hell with it. . . .

I felt for the next ledge, gripped it, pulled up, found a toe-hold.

Sure, I was dead. It was a long way to the top, and there was a fancy cornice I'd never get over, but when the moment came and I started the long ride down I'd thumb my nose at the old hag, Instinct, who hadn't been as tough as she thought she was. . . .

I WAS under the cornice now, hanging on for a breather and listening to the hooting and hollering from the window far below. A couple of heads had popped out and taken a look, but it was dark up where I was and

all the attention was centered down where the crowd had gathered and lights were playing, looking for the mess. Pretty soon now they'd begin to get the drift—so I'd better be going.

I looked up at the overhang . . . and felt the old urge to clutch and hang on. So I leaned outward a little further, just to show me who was boss. It was a long reach, and I'd have to risk it all on one lunge because, if I missed, there wasn't any net, and my fingers knew it; I heard my nails rasp on the plaster. I grated my teeth together and unhooked one hand: it was like a claw carved from wood. I took a half-breath, bent my knees slightly; they were as responsive as a couple of bumper-jacks bolted on at the hip. Tough; but it was now or never. . . .

I let go with both hands and stretched, leaning back. . . .

My wooden hands bumped the edge, scrabbled, hooked on, as my legs swung free, and I was hanging like an old-time sailor strung up by the thumbs. A wind off the roof whipped at my face and now I was a tissue-paper doll, fluttering in the breeze.

I HAD to pull now, pull hard, heave myself up and over the edge, but I was tired, too tired, and a dark curtain was falling over me . . .

Then from the darkness a

voice was speaking in a strange language: a confusion of strange thought symbols, but through them an ever more insistent call:

. . . dilate the secondary vascular complex, shunt full conductivity to the upsilon neuro-channel. Now, stripping oxygen ions from fatty cell masses, pour in electro-chemical energy to the sinews. . . .

With a smooth surge of power I pulled myself up, fell forward, rolled onto my back, and lay on the flat roof, the beautiful flat roof, still warm from the day's sun.

I was here, looking at the stars, safe, and later on when I had more time I'd stop to think about it. But now I had to move, before they'd had time to organize themselves, cordon off the building, and start a door-to-floor search.

Staggering a bit from the exertion of the long climb I got to my feet, went to the shed housing the entry to the service stair. A short flight of steps led down to a storeroom. There were dusty boards, dried-up paint cans, odd tools. I picked up a five-foot length of two-by-four and a hammer with one claw missing, and stepped out into the hall. The street was a long way down and I didn't feel like wasting time with stairs. I found the elevator, got in and pushed the button for the foyer.

IN a few seconds it stopped and the doors opened. I glanced out, tightened my grip on the hammer, and stepped out. I could see the lights in the street out front and in the distance there was the wail of a siren, but nobody in the lobby looked my way. I headed across toward the side exit, dumped the board at the door, tucked the hammer in the waist band of my pants, and stepped out onto the pavement. There were a lot of people hurrying past but this was Lima: they didn't waste a glance on a bare-footed carpenter.

I moved off, not hurrying. There was a lot of rough country between me and Itzenca, the little town near which the life boat was hidden in a cañon, but I aimed to cover it in a week. Some time between now and tomorrow I'd have to figure out a way to equip myself with a few necessities, but I wasn't worried. A man who had successfully taken up human-fly work in middle life wouldn't have any trouble stealing a pair of boots.

Foster had shoved off for home three years ago, local time, although to him, aboard the ship, only a few weeks might have passed. My life-boat was a midge compared to the mother ship he rode, but it had plenty of speed. Once aboard the lugger . . . and maybe I could put a little space between me and the big boys.

I had used the best camouflage I knew of on the boat. The near-savage native bearers who had done my unloading and carried my Vallonian treasures across the desert to the nearest railhead were not the gossipy type. If General Smale's boys had heard about the boat, they hadn't mentioned it. And if they had: well, I'd solve that one when I got to it. There were still quite a few 'if's' in the equation, but my arithmetic was getting better all the time.

CHAPTER XIII

I TOOK the precaution of sneaking up on the lifeboat in the dead of night, but I could have saved myself a crawl. Except for the fact that the camouflage nets had rotted away to shreds, the ship was just as I had left it, doors sealed. Why Smale's team hadn't found it, I didn't know; I'd think that one over when I was well away from Earth.

I went into the post office at Itzenca to pick up the parcel Margareta had mailed me with Foster's memory-trace in it. While I was checking to see whether Uncle Sam's minions had intercepted the package and substituted a carrot, I felt something rubbing against my shin. I glanced down and saw a grey and white cat, reasonably clean and obviously hungry. I don't know



whether I'd ploughed through a field of wild catnip the night before or if it was my way with a finger behind the furry ears, but kitty followed me out of Itzenca and right into the bush. She kept pace with me, leading most of the time, as far as the space boat, and was the first one aboard.

I didn't waste time with formalities. I had once audited a briefing rod on the boat's operation—not that I had ever expected to use the information for a take-off. Once aboard, I hit the controls and cut a swathe through the atmosphere that must have sent fingers jumping for panic buttons from Washington to Moscow.

I didn't know how many weeks or months of unsullied leisure stretched ahead of me now. There would be time to spare for exploring the boat, working out a daily routine, chewing over the details of both my memories, and laying plans for my arrival on Foster's world, Vallon. But first I wanted to catch a show that was making a one-night stand for me only: the awe-inspiring spectacle of the retreating Earth.

I DROPPED into a seat opposite the screen and flipped into a view the big luminous ball of wool that was my home planet. I'd been hoping to get a last look at my island, but I couldn't see

it. The whole sphere was blanketed in cloud: a thin worn blanket in places but still intact. But the moon was a sight! An undipped Edam cheese with the markings of Roquefort. For a quarter of an hour I watched it grow until it filled my screen. It was too close for comfort. I dumped the tabby out of my lap and adjusted a dial. The dead world swept past, and I had a brief glimpse of blue burst bubbles of craters that became the eyes and mouth and pock marks of a face on a head that swung away from me in disdain and then the sibling planets dwindled and were gone forever.

The life boat was completely equipped, and I found comfortable quarters. An ample food supply was available by the touch of a panel on the table in the screen-room. That was a trick my predecessor with the dental jewelry hadn't discovered, I guessed. During the course of my first journey earthward and on my visits to the boat for saleable playthings while she lay in dry-dock, I had discovered most of the available amenities aboard. Now I luxuriated in a steaming bath of recycled water, sponged down with disposable towels packed in scented alcohol, fed the cat and myself, and lay down to sleep for about two weeks.

By the third week I was reasonably refreshed and rested. The

cat was a godsend, I began to realize. I named her Itzenca, after the village where she adopted me, and I talked to her by the hour.

"Say, Itz," said I, "where would you like your sand box situated? Right there in front of the TV screen?"

No, said Itzenca by a flirt of her tail. And she walked over behind a crate that had never been unloaded on earth.

I pulled out a box of junk and slid the sand-box in its place. Itzenca promptly lost interest and instead jumped up on the junk box which fell off the bench and scattered small objects of khaff and metal in all directions.

"Come back here, blast you," I said, "and help me pick up this stuff."

Itz bounded after a dull-gleaming silver object that was still rolling. I was there almost as quick as she was and grabbed up the cylinder. Suddenly horsing around was over. This thing was somebody's memory.

I DROPPED onto a bench to examine it, my Vallonian-inspired pulse pounding. Itz jumped up into my lap and nosed the cylinder. I was trying to hark back to those days three years before when I had loaded the lifeboat with all the loot it would carry, for the trip back to Earth.

"Listen, Itz, we've got to do

some tall remembering. Let's see: there was a whole rack of blanks in the memory-recharging section of the room where we found the three skeletons. Yeah, now I remember: I pulled this one out of the recorder set. I showed it to Foster when he was hunting his own trace. He didn't realize I'd pulled it out of the machine and he thought it was an empty. But I'll bet you somebody had his mind taped, and then left in a hurry, before the trace could be color-coded and filed.

"On the other hand, maybe it's a blank that had just been inserted when somebody broke up the play-house. . . . But wasn't there something Foster said . . . about when he woke up, way back when, with a pile of fresh corpses around him? He gave somebody emergency treatment and to a Vallonian that would include a complete memory-transcription. . . . Do you realize what I've got here in my hand, Itz?"

She looked up at me inquiringly.

"This is what's left of the guy that Foster buried: his pal, Ammaerln, I think he called him. What's inside his cylinder used to be tucked away in the skull of the Ancient Sinner. The guy's not so dead after all. I'll bet his family will pay plenty for this trace, and be grateful besides. That'll be an ace in the hole in

case I get too hungry on Vallon."

I got up, crossed the apartment and dropped the trace in a drawer beside Foster's own memory.

"Wonder how Foster's making out without his past, Itz? He claimed the one I've got here could only be a copy of the original stored at Okk-Hamiloth, but my briefing didn't say anything about copying memories. He must be somebody pretty important to rate that service."

Suddenly my eyes were riveted to the markings on Foster's trace lying in the drawer. "Zblood! The royal colors!" I sat down on the bed with a lurch. "Itzenca, old gal, it looks like we'll be entering Vallonian society from the top. We've been consorting with a member of the Vallonian nobility!"

DURING the days that followed, I tried again and again to raise Foster on the communicator . . . without result. I wondered how I'd find him among the millions on the planet. My best bet would be to get settled down in the Vallonian environment, then start making a few inquiries.

I would play it casually: act the part of a Vallonian who had merely been travelling for a few hundred years—which wasn't unheard of—and play my cards close to my gravy stains until I

learned what the score was. With my Vallonian briefing I ought to be able to carry it off. The Vallonians might not like illegal immigrants any better than they did back home, so I'd keep my interesting foreign background to myself.

I would need a new name. I thought over several possibilities and selected "Drgon." It was as good a Vallonian jawbreaker as any.

I canvassed the emergency wardrobe that was standard equipment on Far-Voyager lifeboats and picked one in a sober color, then got busy with the cutting and seaming unit to fit it to my frame.

* * *

The proximity alarms were ringing. I watched the screen with its image of a great green world rimmed on one edge with glading white from the distant giant sun, on the other, flooded with a cool glow reflected from the blue outer planet. The trip was almost over and my confidence was beginning to fray around the edges. In a few minutes I would be stepping into an unknown world, all set to find my old pal Foster and see the sights. I didn't have a passport, but there was no reason to anticipate trouble. All I had to do was let my natural identity take a back seat and allow my Vallonian

background to do the talking. And yet . . .

Now Vallon spread out below us, a misty grey-green landscape, bright under the glow of the immense moon-like sister world. I had set the landing monitor for Okk-Hamiloth, the capital city of Vallon. That was where Foster would have headed, I guessed. Maybe I could pick up the trail there.

The city was directly below: a vast network of blue-lit avenues. I hadn't been contacted by planetary control. That was normal, however. A small vessel coming in on auto could handle itself.

A little apprehensively I ran over my lines a last time: I was Drgon, citizen of the Two Worlds, back from a longer-than-average season of far-voyaging and in need of briefing rods to bring me up to date on developments at home. I also required assignment of quarters . . . and directions to the nearest beer-joint. My tailoring was impeccable, my command of the language a little rusty from long non-use, and the only souvenirs I had to declare were a tattered native costume from my last port of call, a quaint weapon from the same, and a small animal I had taken a liking to.

THE landing ring was visible the screen now, coming slowly

up to meet us. There was a gentle shock and then absolute stillness. I watched the port cycle open; I went to it and looked out at the pale city stretching away to the hills. I took a breath of the fragrant night air that was spiced with a long-forgotten perfume, and the part of me that was now Vallonian ached with the inexpressible emotion of homecoming.

I started to buckle on my pistol and gather up a few belongings, then decided to wait until I'd met the welcoming committee. I whistled to Itzenca and we stepped out and down. We crossed the clipped green, luminous in the glow from the lights over the high-arched gate marking the path that curved up toward the bright-lit terraces above. There was no one in sight. Bright Cintelight showed me the gardens and walks and, when I reached the terraces, the avenues beyond . . . but no people.

The cat and I walked across the terrace, passed through the open arch to a refreshment lounge. The low tables and cushioned couches stood empty under the rosy light from the ceiling panels.

I stood and listened: dead silence. The lights glowed, the tables waited invitingly. How long had they waited?

I sat down at one of them and thought hard. I had made a lot of

plans, but I hadn't counted on a deserted spaceport. How was I going to ask questions about Foster if there was no one to ask?

I got up and moved on through the empty lounge, past a wide arcade, out onto a terraced lawn. A row of tall poplar-like trees made a dark wall beyond a still pool, and behind them distant towers loomed, colored lights sparkled. A broad avenue swept in a wide curve between fountains, slanted away to the hills. A hundred yards from where I stood a small vehicle was parked at the curb; I headed for it.

It was an open two-seater, low-slung, cushioned, finished in violet inlays against bright chrome. I slid into the seat, looked over the controls, while Itzenca skipped to a place beside me. There was a simple lever arrangement: a steering tiller. It looked easy. I tried a few pulls and pushes; lights blinked on the panel, the car quivered, lifted a few inches, drifted slowly across the road. I moved the tiller, twiddled things; the car moved off toward the towers.

TWO hours later we had cruised the city . . . and found nothing. It hadn't changed from what my extra memory recalled—except that all the people were gone. The parks and boulevards were trimmed, the fountains and pools sparkled, the lights glowed . . .

but nothing moved. The automatic dust precipitators and air filters would run forever, keeping things clean and neat; but there was no one there to appreciate it. I pulled over, sat watching the play of colored lights on a waterfall, and considered. Maybe I'd find more of a clue inside one of the buildings. I left the car and picked one at random: a tall slab of pink crystal. Inside, I looked around at a great airy cavern full of rose-colored light and listened to the purring of the cat and my own breathing. There was nothing else to hear.

I picked a random corridor, went along it, passing through one empty room after another. I went out on a lofty terrace overlooking gardens, leaned on a balustrade, and looked up at the brilliant disc of Cinte.

"We've come a long way to find nothing," I said to Itzenca. She pushed her way along my leg and flexed her tail in a gesture meant to console.

I sat on the balustrade and leaned back against the polished pink wall, took out a clarinet I'd found in one of the rooms and blew some blue notes. That which once had been was no more; remembering it, I played the *Pavane for a Dead-Princess*.

I finished and looked up at a sound. Four tall men in grey cloaks and a glitter of steel came toward me from the shadows.

I HAD dropped the clarinet and was on my feet. I tried to back up but the balustrade stopped me. The four spread out. The man in the lead fingered a wicked-looking short club and spoke to me—in gibberish. I blinked at him and tried to think of a snappy comeback.

He snapped his fingers and two of the others came up; they reached for my arms. I started to square off, fist cocked, then relaxed; after all, I was just a tourist, Drgon by name. Unfortunately, before I could get my fist back, the man with the club swung it and caught me across the forearm. I yelled, jumped back, found myself grappled by the others. My arm felt dead to the shoulder. I tried a kick and regretted that too; there was armor under the cloaks. The club wielder said something and pointed at the cat . . .

It was time I wised up. I relaxed, tried to coax my alter ego into the foreground. I listened to the rhythm of the language: it was Vallonian, badly warped by time, but I could understand it:

“—musician would be an Owner!” one of them said.

Laughter.

“Whose man are you, piper? What are your colors?”

I curled my tongue, tried to shape it around the sort of syllables I heard them uttering, but

it seemed to me a gross debasement of the Vallonian I knew. Still I managed an answer:

“I . . . am a . . . citizen . . . of Vallon.”

“A dog of a masterless renegade?” The man with the club hefted it, glowered at me. “And what wretched dialect is that you speak?”

“I have . . . been long a-voyaging,” I stuttered. “I ask . . . for briefing rods . . . and for a . . . dwelling place.”

“A dwelling place you’ll have,” the man said. “In the men’s shed at Rath-Gallion.” He gestured, and snapped handcuffs on me.

He turned and stalked away, and the others hustled me after him. Over my shoulder I got a glimpse of a cat’s tail disappearing over the balustrade. Outside, a long grey aircar waited on the lawn. They dumped me in the back seat, climbed aboard. I got a last look at the spires of Okk-Hamilo as we tilted, hurtled away across the low hills.

I had had an idealistic notion of wanting to fit into this new world, find a place in its society. I’d found a place all right: a job with security.

I was a slave.

CHAPTER XIV

IT was banquet night at Rath-Gallion, and I gulped my soup in the kitchen and ran over in

my mind the latest batch of jingles I was expected to perform. I had only been on the Estate a few weeks, but I was already Owner Gope's favorite piper. If I kept on at this rate, I would soon have a cell to myself in the slave pens.

Sime, the pastry cook, came over to me.

"Pipe us a merry tune, Drgon," he said, "and I'll reward you with a frosting pot."

"With pleasure, good Sime," I said. I finished off the soup and got out my clarinet. I had tried out half a dozen strange instruments, but I still liked this one best. "What's your pleasure?"

"One of the outland tunes you learned far-voyaging," called Cagu, the bodyguard.

I complied with the *Beer Barrel Polka*. They pounded the table and hallooed when I finished, and I got my goody pan. Sime stood watching me scrape at it.

"Why don't you claim the Chief Piper's place, Drgon?" he said. "You pipe rings around the lout. Then you'd have freeman status, and could sit among us in the kitchen almost as an equal."

"I'd gladly be the equal of such a pastry cook as yourself," I said. "But what can a slave-piper do?"

Sime blinked at me. "You can challenge the Chief Piper," he said. "There's none can deny you're his master in all but name. Don't fear the outcome of the

Trial; you'll triumph sure."

"But how can I claim another's place?" I asked.

Sime waved his arms. "You have far-voyaged long indeed, Piper Drgon. Know you naught of how the world wags these days? One would take you for a Cinteian heretic."

"As I've said, in my youth all men were free; and the High King ruled at Okk-Hamilo—"

"'Tis ill to speak of these things," said Sime in a low tone. "Only Owners know their former lives . . . though I've heard it said that long ago no man was so mean but that he recorded his lives and kept them safe. How you came by yours, I ask not; but do not speak of it. Owner Gope is a jealous master. Though a most generous and worshipful lord," he added hastily, looking around.

"I won't speak of it then, good Sime," I said. "But I have been long away. Even the language has changed, so that I wrench my tongue in the speaking of it. Advise me, if you will."

Sime puffed out his cheeks, frowning at me. "I scarce know where to start," he said. "All things belong to the Owners . . . as is only right. Men of low skill are likewise property; and 'tis well 'tis so; else would they starve as masterless strays . . . if the Greymen failed to find them first." He made a sign and spat.

NOW men of good skill are freemen, each earning rewards as befits his ability. I am Chief Pastry Cook to the Lord Gope, with the perquisites of that station, therefore, that none other equals my talents."

"And if some varlet claims the place of any man here," put in Cagu, "then he gotta submit to the trial."

"Then," said Sime, "this up-start pastry cook must cook against me; and all in the Hall will judge; and he who prevails is the Chief Pastry Cook, and the other takes a dozen lashes for his impertinence."

"But fear not, Drgon," spoke Cagu. "A Chief Piper ain't but a five-stroke man. Only a tutor is lower down among freemen."

There was a bellow from the door, and I grabbed my clarinet and scrambled after the page. Owner Gope didn't like to wait around for piper-slaves. I saw him looming up at his place, as I darted through to my assigned position within the huge circle of the viand-loaded table. The Chief Piper had just squeezed his bagpipe-like instrument and released a windy blast of discordant sound. He was a lean, squint-eyed rascal fond of ordering the slave-pipers about. He pranced in an intricate pattern, pumping away at his vari-colored bladders, until I winced at the screech of it. Owner Gope no-

ticed him about the same time. He picked up a heavy brass mug and half rose to peg it at the Chief Piper, who saw it just in time to duck. The mug hit a swollen air-bag; it burst with a sour bleat.

"As sweet a note as has been played tonight," roared Owner Gope. "Begone, lest you call up the hill devils—"

His eye fell on me. "Now here's a true piper. Summon up a fair melody, Drgon, to clear the fumes of the last performer from the air before the wine sours."

I bowed low, wet my lips, and launched into the *One O' Clock Jump*. To judge from the roar that went up when I finished, they liked it. I followed with *Little Brown Jug* and *String of Pearls*. Gope pounded and the table quieted down.

"The rarest slave in all Rath-Gallion, I swear it," he bellowed. "Were he not a slave, I'd drink to his health."

"By your leave, Owner?" I said.

Gope stared, then nodded indulgently. "Speak then."

"I claim the place of Chief Piper. I—"

Yells rang out; Gope grinned widely.

"So be it," he said. "Shall the vote be taken now, or must we submit to more of the vile bladderings ere we proclaim our good

Drgon Chief Piper? Speak out."

"Proclaim him!" somebody shouted.

Gope slammed a huge hand against the table. "Bring Iylk, the Chief Piper, before me," he yelled.

The piper reappeared.

"The place of the Chief Piper is declared vacant," Gope said loudly. "—since the former Chief Piper has been advanced in degree to a new office. Let these air-bags be punctured," Gope cried. "I banish their rancid squeals forever from Rath-Gallion. Now, let all men know: this former piper is now Chief Fool to this household. Let him wear the broken bladders as a sign of his office." There was a roar of laughter, glad cries, whistles.

I gave them *Mairzy Doats* and the former piper capered gingerly. Owner Gope roared with laughter.

"A great day for Rath-Gallion," Gope shouted. "By the horns of the sea-god, I have gained a prince of pipers and a king of fools! I proclaim them to be ten-lash men, and both shall have places at table henceforth!"

I LOOKED around the barbarically decorated hall, seeing things in a new way. There's nothing like a little slavery to make a man appreciate even a modest portion of freedom. Ev-

everything I had thought I knew about Vallon had been wrong: the centuries that passed had changed things—and not for the better. The old society that Foster knew was dead and buried. The old places and villas lay deserted, the spaceports unused. And the old system of memory-recording that Foster described was lost and forgotten. I didn't know what kind of a cataclysm could have plunged the seat of a galactic empire back into feudal darkness—but it had happened.

So far I hadn't found a trace of Foster. My questions had gotten me nothing but blank stares. Maybe Foster hadn't made it; there could have been an accident in space. Or perhaps he was somewhere on the opposite side of the world. Vallon was a big planet and communications were poor. Maybe Foster was dead. I could live out a long life here and never find the answers.

I remembered my own disappointment at the breakdown of my illusions that night at Okk-Hamiloth. How much more heartbreaking must have been Foster's experience when and if he had arrived back here.

And Foster's memory that I had been bringing him for a keepsake; what a laugh that was! Far from being a superfluous duplicate of a master trace to which he had expected easy access, my copy of the trace was

now, with the vaults at Okk-Ham-ilothe sealed and forbidden, of the greatest possible importance to Foster—and there wasn't a machine left on the planet to play it on.

Well, I still meant to find Foster if it took me—

Owner Gope was humming loudly and tunelessly to himself. I-knew the sign. I got ready to play again. Being Chief Piper probably wasn't going to be just a bowl of cherries, but at least I wasn't a slave now. I had a long way to go, but I was making progress.

OWNER Gope and I got along well. He took me everywhere he went. He was a shrewd old duck and he liked having such an unusual piper on hand. He had heard from the Greymen, the free-lance police force, how I had landed at the deserted port. He warned me, in an oblique way, not to let word get out that I knew anything about old times in Vallon. The whole subject was tabu—especially the old capital city and the royal palaces themselves. Small wonder that my trespassing there had brought the Greymen down on me in double quick time.

One afternoon several months after my promotion I dropped in at the kitchen. I was due to shove off with Owner Gope and his usual retinue for a visit to

Bar-Ponderone, a big estate a hundred miles north of Rath-Gallion in the direction of Okk-Hamilothe. Sime and my other old cronies fixed me up with a healthy lunch and a bottle of melon wine, and warned me that it would be a rough trip; the stretch of road we'd be using was a favorite hang-out of road pirates.

"What I don't understand," I said, "is why Gope doesn't mount a couple of guns on the car and blast his way through the raiders. Every time he goes off the Estate he's taking his life in his hands."

The boys were shocked. "Even piratical renegades would never dream of taking a man's life, good Drgon," Sime said. "Every Owner, far and near, would band together to hunt such miscreants down. And their own fellows would abet the hunters! Nay, none is so low as to steal all a man's lives."

"The corsairs themselves know full well that in their next life they may be simple goodmen—even slaves," the Chief Wine-Pourer put in. "For you know, good Drgon, that when a member of a pirate band suffers the Change the others lead the new-man to an Estate, that he may find his place. . . ."

"How often do these Changes come along?" I asked.

"It varies greatly. Some men,

of great strength and moral power, have been known to go on unchanged for three or four hundred years. But the ordinary man lives a life of eighty to one hundred years." Sime paused. "Or it may be less. A life of travail and strife can end much sooner than one of peace and retirement. Or unusual vicissitudes can shorten a life remarkably. A cousin of mine, who was marooned on the Great Stony Place in the southern half-world and who wandered for three weeks without more to eat or drink than a small bag of wine, underwent the Change after only fourteen years. When he was found his face was lined and his hair had greyed, in the way that presages the Change. And it was not long before he fell in a fit, as one does, and slept for a night and a day. When he awoke he was a newman: young and knowing nothing."

"Didn't you tell him who he was?"

"Nay!" Sime lowered his voice. "You are much favored of Owner Gope, good Drgon, and rightly. Still, there are matters a man talks not of—"

"A newman takes a name and sets out to learn whatever trade he can," put in the Carver of Roasts. "By his own skills he can rise . . . as you have risen, good Drgon."

"Don't you have memory ma-

chines—or briefing rods?" I persisted. "Little black sticks: you touch them to your head and—"

Sime made a motion in the air. "I have heard of these wands: a forbidden relic of the Black Arts—"

"Nuts," I said. "You don't believe in magic, do you, Sime? The rods are nothing but a scientific development by your own people. How you've managed to lose all knowledge of your own past—"

Sime raised his hands in distress. "Good Drgon, press us not in these matters. Such things are forbidden."

I WENT on out to the car and climbed in to wait for Owner Gope. It was impossible to learn anything about Vallon's history from these goodmen. They knew nothing.

I had reached a few tentative conclusions on my own, however. My theory was that some sudden social cataclysm had broken down the system of personality reinforcement and memory recording that had given continuity to the culture. Vallonian society, based as it was on the techniques of memory preservation, had gradually disintegrated. Vallon was plunged into a feudal state resembling its ancient social pattern of fifty thousand years earlier, before development of memory recording.

The people, huddled together on Estates for protection from real or imagined perils and shunning the old villas and cities as tabu—except for those included in Estates—knew nothing of space travel and ancient history. Like Sime, they had no wish even to speak of such matters.

I might have better luck with my detective work on a big Estate like Bar-Ponderone. I was looking forward to today's trip.

Gope appeared, with Cagu and two other bodyguards, four dancing girls, and an extra-large gift hamper. They took their places and the driver started up and wheeled the heavy car out onto the highroad. I felt a pulse of excitement as we accelerated in the direction of Bar-Ponderone. Maybe at the end of the ride I'd hit paydirt.

WE were doing about fifty down a winding mountain road. As we rounded a curve, the wheels screeching from the driver's awkward, too-fast swing into the turn, we saw another car in the road a quarter of a mile ahead, not moving, but parked—sideways. The driver hit the brakes.

Behind us Owner Gope yelled "Pirates! Don't slacken your pace, driver. Ram the blackguards, if you must!"

The driver rolled his eyes, almost lost control, then gritted

his teeth, reached out to switch off the anti-collision circuit and slam the speed control lever against the dash. I watched for two long heart beats as we roared straight for the blocking car, then I slid over and grabbed for the controls. The driver held on, frozen. I rared back and clipped him on the jaw. He crumpled into his corner, mouth open and eyes screwed shut, as I hit the auto-steer override and worked the tiller. It was an awkward position for steering, but I preferred it to hammering in at ninety per.

The car ahead was still sitting tight, now a hundred yards away, now fifty. I cut hard to the right, toward the rising cliff face; the car backed to block me. At the last instant I whipped to the left, barrelled past with half an inch to spare, rocketed along the ragged edge with the left wheel rolling on air, then whipped back into the center of the road.

"Well done!" yelled Cagu.

"But they'll give chase!" Gope shouted. "Masterless swine!"

The driver had his eyes open now. "Crawl over me!" I barked. He mumbled and clambered past me and I slid into his seat, still clinging to the accelerator lever and putting up the speed. Another curve was coming up. I grabbed a quick look in the rear-viewer: the pirates were swinging around to follow us.

"Press on!" commanded Gope. "We're close to Bar-Ponderone; it's no more than five miles—"

"What kind of speed have they got?" I called back.

"They'll best us easy," said Cagu cheerfully.

"What's the road like ahead?"

"A fair road, straight and true, now that we've descended the mountain," answered Gope.

We squealed through the turn and hit a straightaway. A curving road branched off ahead.

"What's that?" I snapped.

"A winding trail," gasped the driver. "It comes on Bar-Ponderone, but by a longer way."

I gauged my speed, braked minutely, and cut hard. We howled up the steep slope, into a turn between hills.

Gope shouted. "What madness is this?!"

"We haven't got a chance on the straightaway," I called back. "Not in a straight speed contest."

I whipped the tiller over, then back the other way, following the tight S-curves. I caught a glimpse of our pursuers, just heading into the side road behind us.

"Any way they can head us off?" I yelled.

"Not unless they have confederates stationed ahead," said Gope; "but these pariahs work alone."

I worked the brake and speed

levers, handled the tiller. We swung right, then left, higher and higher, then down a steep grade and up again. The pirate car rounded a turn, only a few hundred yards behind now. I scanned the road ahead, followed its winding course along the mountainside, through a tunnel, then out again to swing around the shoulder of the next peak.

"Pitch something out when we go through the tunnel!" I yelled.

"My cloak," cried Gope. "And the gift hamper."

We roared into the tunnel mouth. There was a blast of air as the rear deck cover opened. Gope and Cagu hefted the heavy gift hamper, tumbled it out, followed it with a cloak, a wine jug, assorted sandals, bracelets, fruit. Then we were back in the sunlight and I was fighting the curve. In the rear-viewer I saw the pirates burst from the tunnel mouth, Gope's black and yellow cloak spread over the canopy, smashed fruit spattered over it, the remains of the hamper dragging under the chassis. The car rocked and a corner of the cloak lifted, clearing the driver's view barely in time.

"Tough luck," I said. "We've got a long straight stretch ahead, and I'm fresh out of ideas. . . ."

(Concluded next month)



THE SPECTROSCOPE

by S. E. COTTS

The Wind from Nowhere. By J. G. Ballard. 160 pp. Berkley Medallion Books. Paper: 50¢.

Can this book really be the work of our J. G. Ballard whose promising short stories were reviewed here in June? Here is a novel simply reeking with ominous portents, a plot that begs for a few great ideas, and it all comes to nothing. My previous remarks have boomeranged. At that time, in speaking of Mr. Ballard's short stories, I implied that his prose was too big for the limitations of his chosen form. Now he gives us a work of book length that is totally unimportant. What we are led to imagine by the title, *The Wind from Nowhere*, and the chapter headings, adds fuel to our imaginings—"Death in a Bunker." "The Corridors of Pain," etc! Here is this mysterious wind that comes. Cities are reduced to rubble before it. People are driven underground. Panic strikes as the force of the

gale increases each day—175 m.p.h. and still no sign of a let-up. What delicious possibilities this presents! What's behind this destruction—a mad scientist, radioactivity, men from Mars??? No, none of these choices. What an anticlimax to find out that it's just a kind of meteorological freak! And how does it get stopped in the end, right before the hero is about to get killed—does science find a way, does help arrive from outer space, does prayer win out? No, nothing like this. Why, it just kind of stops of its own accord!

Parents and teachers often advise us that "Some things are better left unsaid." Well, take the advice of this reviewer. "Here is a book that is better left unread."

The 50¢ price tag on Berkley Books (even the good ones) is out of line with the majority of the paperbacks. Bantam and Pyramid are both 40¢. Ace gets 35¢ or 40¢ depending on size. For 50¢

you can do better than this with the classics from Signet and Ballantine.

The Great Flying Saucer Hoax.
By Coral E. Lorenzen. 257 pp.
The William-Frederick Press.
\$4.45.

Mrs. Lorenzen, director of the Aerial Phenomena Research Organization, has literally lived and breathed nothing but flying saucers for many years now. Her organization is on the conservative side of the spectrum as far as such groups go. Even if I hadn't known this fact before reading the book it would have been obvious after doing so. For the volume stoutly resists the many opportunities for sensationalism inherent in the subject. It is a sober and painstakingly austere analysis.

She is as well qualified as anyone to write on this subject about which so few know so little. Though not a scientist herself, she has access to scientific opinion, and her organization serves as a clearing house for sightings all over the globe. Mrs. Lorenzen goes about her work as if it were a crusade. And like all crusaders through the ages, she is firmly convinced of the rightness of her cause and is anxious to convert others to it. Unfortunately, she lacks one of the necessary attributes of a first-

rate evangelist—"the gift of tongues." Though I don't doubt her sincerity and her ability to marshal pertinent data, she lacks the kind of touch that can arrange this data in the most rewarding and convincing form. I am not calling for more flamboyance and have only respect for her lack of it. But through her zeal to omit no relevant detail, she has included much extraneous material. In her desire to include a multitude of sightings, she has come up with a confusing chronology in many cases. Because of her scrupulous honesty, she has included both convincing and unconvincing cases, and, to the relatively uninitiated reader, it all tends to become jumbled after a bit.

It is too bad that she didn't avail herself of the services of an editor who could, without in any way twisting or distorting, have arranged her material in the most advantageous way. As it stands, the book will undoubtedly interest and excite science fiction fans, but I doubt it will reach the larger audience for which she had hoped.

There is a quality of naivete about some of her writing, however, when she gets in the realm of ideas rather than data. I find it hard to believe that anyone of the author's experience (via fruitless correspondence with military and political figures)

could believe in this day and age that our press is really free. To be sure, we do not have government censorship, but it is one of the economic facts of life that the number of newspapers in the United States not dependent for their continued publication on the revenues of business advertisements is practically non-existent.

Another flaw, though a more subjective one, is this. One can believe all the "facts" which the author has assembled and yet disagree with her conclusion. On the basis of the data given here, one cannot say that the UFO's (Unidentified Flying Objects) are a potential threat to the security of mankind. Any person broad-minded enough to concede the existence of extraterrestrial life should also be sufficiently thoughtful to see that such life may be so alien to us, at least in the beginning, that to apply such elementary concepts as hostile or dangerous would be very unscientific.

As one can see from all I've written, the title, *The Great Flying Saucer Hoax*, hardly means that Mrs. Lorenzen and her group think UFO's are phoney. It refers to what she considers the efforts of military and government sources to keep the truth about the existence and meaning of the saucers from the people and which, in her

opinion, amounts to an authoritarian conspiracy. This is probably true, and I say this not because I have ever seen a saucer myself, but because it isn't the first time the government has shrouded certain affairs in secrecy. Nor will it be the last, I'm afraid. Probably the government does this under the mistaken notion that the electorate could not accept these matters in an enlightened fashion. Rather, they should realize that an electorate must be informed to act or react intelligently, and that to withhold information is to thwart and pervert the democratic process because the will of the people cannot then make itself known and felt. Though I agree with the seriousness of the author's grievance in this respect, there are situations of more immediate danger which the government chooses to conceal—for example, the real threats of radioactivity.

SPECTROSCOPE NOTES:

The Classics Corner has been having a windfall since I last reported on it. Though I'm sure all fans will welcome the chance to add topnotch reprints to their permanent collections, some may wish, as I do, that there were even half as many good new books to place alongside them. Here are a few of the best old-timers in their shiny new jackets.

The Haunted Stars. By Edmond Hamilton. 159 pp. Pyramid Books. Paper: 40¢.

This holds up very well on re-reading.

The 1,000 Year Plan (originally *Foundation*). By Isaac Asimov. 160 pp. Ace Books. Paper: 35¢.

Why, oh why, these title changes?

Starship Troopers. By Robert A. Heinlein. 208 pp. Signet Books. Paper: 50¢.

Included in the list (even though its military bias and excessive patriotism are annoying) because it is an original and convincing work.

The October Country. By Ray Bradbury. 276 pp. Ballantine Books. Paper: 50¢.

From the Ocean, From the Stars. (An anthology containing the novels *The City and the Stars* and *The Deep Range* and the twenty-four short stories which comprise *The Other Side of the Sky*.) By Arthur Clarke. 515 pp. Harcourt, Brace & World. \$4.50.

This is the bonanza of the year, when one considers that *The Other Side of the Sky* alone was sporting a \$3.95 price tag when it came out—to say nothing of the obvious fact that here is an enormous chunk of Clarke's output in permanent form.

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(Continued from page 5)

jams, farm surpluses, and the other assorted headaches of capitalist existence.

And both countries would know: 1) exactly what the other fellow had in the way of retaliatory strike-power; and 2) exactly where the other fellow's retaliatory weapons *were*, so that they *could* be wiped out to a considerable degree. Under such circumstances, war is unthinkable.

I can't really claim credit for this stroke of genius, though. Most of you will recall a story by Murray Leinster called "First

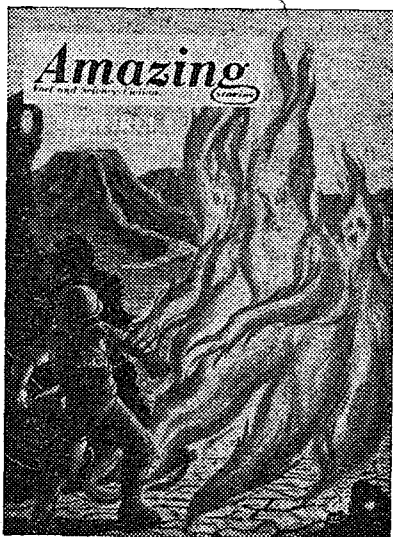
Contact," in which spaceships from Earth and from an alien galaxy meet in mid-space. Query: How to avoid war, how to build a base for friendship.

The answer was simple: the crews destroyed their star maps, left the rest of the ship intact, and then merely exchanged vessels. If the races met again in the future, there would be at least a basis of mutual knowledge for civilized negotiation.

That's what we need today. Mutual understanding. A foundation for civilized negotiation. Thus: the Lobsenz theory.

COMING NEXT MONTH

Edmond Hamilton returns in the September issue of **AMAZING**.



Sunfire! is the title of this stirring story of the confrontation between man and an entirely new kind of life.

Unable to make the current issue, the third in Ben Bova's series on extraterrestrial life will definitely be in September; also the climactic last instalment of Keith Laumer's pulse-pounding novel, *A Trace of Memory*.

Plus a classic reprint, short stories and all our regular features.

September **AMAZING**, on sale at all newsstands August 9.

● *Our April issue evidently hit the spot, to judge from our mail. Here are just a few of the comments—which singled out particularly Ed Hamilton's "Requiem" as an SF classic:*

Dear Editor:

First let me congratulate Mr. Lobsenz on his brilliant editorial. He expressed my sentiments exactly. Bravo!

The same words of praise should go to Mr. Sam Moskowitz for his profile of Isaac Asimov.

D. Randall Stewart
3132 West National Avenue
Milwaukee 15, Wisconsin

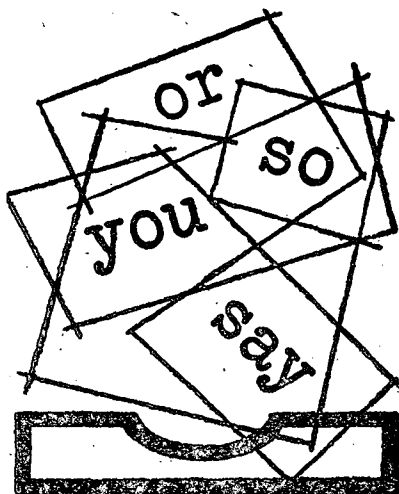
Dear Miss Goldsmith:

In reference to the April issue of AMAZING. In writing "Requiem" Edmond Hamilton has done a truly wonderful thing.

Michael Davidson

Dear Editor:

I continue to be amazed at the continuing improvement in AMAZING. The magazine today is a far cry from what it was a few years ago. At that time it was pointed out as an example of what a science fiction magazine should not be—now the reverse is true. I quite agree with your editorial on shelters in the April issue. The shelter concept is a negative one and a dangerous one. Shelters may serve a useful purpose in the rural areas but would be useless in a metropoli-



tan area should nuclear war become a reality.

It is indeed a pleasure to find Ed Hamilton writing for the magazines again.

Roy Tackett
915 Green Valley Road NW
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Dear Editor:

The April issue had one story that, in my opinion, fits the classification of "deathless prose." Effacement from memory of that story will take more than time.

It is stories like "Requiem" by Edmond Hamilton which make adherence to sf really worthwhile. In ten, twenty or fifty years, "Requiem" will see a reprint as an sf "classic".

Roger Sassen
8021—231 Street
Queens Village 27, N. Y.

Dear Editor:

Personally I loathe Benedict Breadfruit but I guess someone must like them or they wouldn't be in AMAZING. Who really writes them? I think Sharkey? Any other ideas from your other readers?

Arnold Katz
98 Patton Blvd.
Hyde Park, N.Y.

● *Wrong. Not Sharkey. Guess again—the clews are right in view.*

Dear Editor:

The illustrations in a magazine make it more attractive, and the artwork in AMAZING and FANTASTIC is pretty neat. Dan Adkins and Virgil Finlay are good artists (Adkins seems to do especially well with action scenes), and I would like to see more work by Ed Emshwiller. And now a question which seems kind of trivial, but for some reason has been bothering me: Why do you give just the last names of the artists?

Larry Goka
R. 2, Box 73
Unionville, Michigan

● *You heard about Rembrandt and Rubens and Goya and Matisse? Ever see them use first names on their art work?*

Dear Editor:

I was particularly delighted

with the Editorial by Norman Lobsenz in the April issue. This is what I have been trying to tell my parishioners these many months, but he has said it so much better. I would like permission to quote parts of this editorial, in our general church paper, as the exact spiritual answer to all this fall-out-shelter program frenzy! More than the readership of AMAZING should have an opportunity to read this excellent editorial.

Rev. C. M. Morehead
Middle Pt., Ohio

● *Permission granted, with thanks.*

Dear Editor:

When I see an illustration that I like I like to rave about it. And I must admit the illo on the back cover was really superior. I even think it rated higher than some of Finlay's work. Congrats, Dan Adkins.

Moskowitz does a great job on those SF Profiles. When do we get one about the great Bob Bloch? Come on, get on the ball. "Thunder In Space" was pretty good. I'd like to see a lot more of del Rey.

Bernie Bubnis Jr.
65 Walnut Ave.
E. Farmingdale, L.I., N.Y.

● *A Bloch profile is scheduled for the December issue.*



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